

# Chapter 1

## Development Strategy & Process

### Gage County

#### *About This Report*

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is the first regional economic development plan completed by citizen representatives of Gage County, Nebraska. As a member of the Southeast Nebraska Development District, Gage 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.

Gage County, identified as a micropolitan area, 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 Gage County within the larger surrounding region.

Through its CEDS planning process, Gage County seeks to establish a framework for comprehensive, objective reporting on the state of the Gage 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 Gage 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.

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This institution is an Equal Opportunity Provider, and Employer.

## 1. Governance Structure

The County of Gage, Nebraska operates under an organized county government structure of townships and is governed by a board of supervisors. Gage County is one of 27 counties among Nebraska's 93 counties with a township government. The 66 other counties in Nebraska are organized as commissioner counties and are governed by a board of commissioners.

Gage County is governed by a Board of Supervisors with seven (7) members who are elected to four-year terms. (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1  
Gage County Board of Supervisors - Membership 2007

Rex Adams  
David T. Anderson  
Gary Barnard  
Ronald Fleece  
Allen O. Grell  
Shirley A. Gronewold  
Harlan A. Hagemeier

Municipalities in Gage County are organized via instruments of incorporation recorded with the Office of the County Clerk. Twelve incorporated communities are located in the county. The City of Beatrice is the largest community and county seat. It is organized as a "City of the First Class," a classification for Nebraska municipalities with a population between 5,001 and 100,000. The City of Beatrice is organized as a mayor-council form of government.

Two communities, City of Wymore and City of Blue Springs, are organized as a "City of the Second Class," a classification for Nebraska municipalities with a population between 801 and 5,000. Blue Springs maintains its classification even though its population is now below 801 residents. Both cities are organized as a mayor-council form of government.

Nine communities are organized as the municipal classification of "Village." These include Adams, Barneston, Clatonia, Cortland, Filley, Liberty, Odell, Pickrell and Virginia. 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 Gage County Board of Supervisors.

The CEDS Committee is an ad hoc group organized for the sole purpose of developing this initial Gage County CEDS. It 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  
Gage County Ad Hoc Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy  
Committee Membership

Member	Place of Residence	Elective Status	Interest/ Affiliation
Dave Anderson	Odell	Yes	Gage County Board
Darin Baehr	Beatrice	No	Financial Sector
Jim Bauer	Beatrice	No	City of Beatrice
Wayne Brinkmeyer	DeWitt	No	Gage County Planning & Zoning
Dave Clabaugh	Beatrice	Yes	Lower Big Blue NRD Board
Terri Dageford	Beatrice	No	Gage County Economic Development, Inc.
Mark Engler	Beatrice	No	Homestead National Monument
Chris Gramman	Adams	No	Financial Sector
Dennis Headrick	Beatrice	No	Southeast Community College
Mike Jones	Wymore	No	Businessman
Manalle Keefover	Beatrice	No	Gage County Economic Development, Inc.
Marlin Kliewer	Beatrice	No	Gage County Highway Superintendent
Faith Medina	Fairbury	No	Housing Development Consultant
Mark Meints	Beatrice	No	Gage County Emergency Management
Jeff Monohollon	Cortland	Yes	Village of Cortland
Bob Moran	Beatrice	No	Financial/Chamber of Commerce
Dave Norton	Filley	No	Financial Sector
Kevin Pollard	Beatrice	No	Norris Public Power District
Tom Sommers	Beatrice	No	Beatrice Community Hospital
Jim Stanoscheck	Odell	No	Financial Sector
Dave Swavely	Beatrice	Yes	Gage County Board
Dick Tegtmeier	Beatrice	No	Manufacturing Sector

As an ad hoc group, the CEDS Committee is dissolved upon completion of this planning process. Future CEDS planning groups will be convened with new with local and regional representatives.

The Gage County CEDS Committee is constituted of the membership and staff of Gage County Economic Development, Inc. (GCED), including representatives of area private enterprises and public bodies. GCED is a non-profit corporation serving Gage County and area communities and providing local leadership on issues of business, transportation, housing and tourism development.

Working to develop Gage County's 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. The 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.

## *2. Strategic Planning Process*

The Gage County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 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, as designated by the Gage County Board of Supervisors, participated in the strategic planning process and reviewed information gathered through research activities, compilation of community activities, and strategic planning activities.

The 2006 Gage County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 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 Gage 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 Gage County's stakeholders would include:

STAKEHOLDERS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Gage County Economic Development, Inc.</li> <li>&gt; The Board of Supervisors of Gage County as the governing body of Gage County</li> <li>&gt; Gage County's youth</li> <li>&gt; Gage County's seniors</li> <li>&gt; Gage County workers</li> <li>&gt; Gage County's parents</li> <li>&gt; Business and Industry throughout Gage County</li> <li>&gt; Future generations of Gage County residents</li> <li>&gt; Businesses wanting to enter the local market</li> <li>&gt; Businesses outside the County patronized by Gage County residents</li> <li>&gt; Businesses outside the County employing residents of Gage County</li> <li>&gt; Agriculture operations and services</li> <li>&gt; Civic and religious organizations</li> <li>&gt; Area Fire Departments and Auxiliary organizations</li> <li>&gt; Main Street Beatrice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>&gt; Banking and financial institutions</li> <li>&gt; Gage County property owners</li> <li>&gt; People who would like to buy or rent property in Gage County</li> <li>&gt; Utilities serving Gage County residents and businesses</li> <li>&gt; Elected officials</li> <li>&gt; Jurisdictions receiving sales, income or property taxes</li> <li>&gt; Local, regional, state and federal governmental entities</li> <li>&gt; Southeast Nebraska Development District</li> <li>&gt; Community service providers</li> <li>&gt; Business and economic development entities</li> <li>&gt; Schools, community colleges, and other institutions of higher education</li> <li>&gt; Hospital and other healthcare providers</li> <li>&gt; Gage County's municipalities</li> <li>&gt; Travelers who visit Gage County for recreation, business, etc.</li> </ul>

## 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 Gage County. Identification of these issues can assist in developing priorities to guide coordinated activities that address Gage 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"> <li>✧ Beatrice area highway interchanges</li> <li>✧ Government budgets</li> <li>✧ Rural area water quantity (South and East)</li> <li>✧ Rural community water systems (aged)</li> <li>✧ Rural community sewer systems (capacity)</li> <li>✧ Rural community infrastructure planning and resources availability</li> <li>✧ Rail line service availability and recent rail line abandonment</li> <li>✧ Rural county-wide transportation services</li> <li>✧ County-wide senior transportation services</li> <li>✧ Availability of skilled tradesmen</li> <li>✧ Rural high speed information system availability</li> <li>✧ Public services demand in rural northern Gage County</li> <li>✧ Decreasing population in southern Gage County</li> <li>✧ Comprehensive development planning updates/review/enforcement</li> <li>✧ Interlocal governmental cooperation in planning and development</li> <li>✧ Awareness of opportunities among area youth</li> <li>✧ Business transfer awareness and services</li> <li>✧ Recruitment of specialized health care personnel</li> <li>✧ New industrial park facility undeveloped</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Emergency Management systems coverage in rural residential, recreation, and town growth areas</li> <li>✧ Recruitment of specialized health care personnel</li> <li>✧ Health care financing of investments</li> <li>✧ Federal health care reimbursement policies</li> <li>✧ Emergency responder staffing affected by increasing training requirements</li> <li>✧ Gage County image/awareness of opportunities</li> <li>✧ Recognition of metropolitan opportunities especially among prospective "returnee" labor</li> <li>✧ Fiscal health of smaller communities</li> <li>✧ State regulatory environment and process, Safe Water and Clean Water</li> <li>✧ Affordable housing throughout county</li> <li>✧ Availability of appropriate housing serving particular market segments (affordable, special need, and executive)</li> <li>✧ Tight housing market</li> <li>✧ Low unemployment rate and the perception is creates when recruiting</li> <li>✧ Not able to recruit a new 500 job plant</li> <li>✧ Shortage of skilled labor and skilled "e-commerce" labor</li> <li>✧ Competition for available labor supply (especially seasonal labor)</li> <li>✧ Promoting local labor force development</li> </ul>

## IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Value-added agriculture manufacturing</li> <li>✧ Build on existing turf manufacturing cluster</li> <li>✧ County and municipal coordination of investment supporting growth</li> <li>✧ Capitalize on Homestead Expressway (US Hwy 77) corridor</li> <li>✧ Tourism development</li> <li>✧ Support investment in housing providing choice and opportunity</li> <li>✧ Affordable housing services/ availability</li> <li>✧ Capitalize on “micropolitan” region</li> <li>✧ Capture growth opportunities created by proximity to metropolitan area</li> <li>✧ Regional water systems supporting rural community development</li> <li>✧ Cluster development (manufacturing and tourism)</li> <li>✧ Outdoor recreation development</li> <li>✧ Big Blue River basin potential</li> <li>✧ Health care system is engine of growth</li> <li>✧ Health care system services</li> <li>✧ State health and human services presence</li> <li>✧ Expanding health care system services</li> <li>✧ Availability of resources and developers supporting new housing construction</li> <li>✧ Low unemployment rate</li> <li>✧ Develop “family-oriented” labor force programs</li> <li>✧ Existing tourism support services serve resident communities</li> <li>✧ Market Gage County’s geography</li> <li>✧ Trail systems (new and existing)</li> <li>✧ New natural gas pipeline crossing Gage County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Intergovernmental development of Beatrice Bypass</li> <li>✧ Hickory/Hoag Road industrial road loop</li> <li>✧ Rural community and rural residential development</li> <li>✧ Strong fiscal position City of Beatrice</li> <li>✧ Local intergovernmental coordination and cooperation</li> <li>✧ Economic development tools available to assist local businesses (private, local, regional, state, federal)</li> <li>✧ Internet-based business activity and growth</li> <li>✧ Highway system serving county</li> <li>✧ Relocation of Nebraska Highway 4 supporting Homestead National Monument</li> <li>✧ Develop “Educational Parkway” (Plymouth to Beatrice) with agriculture focus</li> <li>✧ Expand rail service within industrial park</li> <li>✧ Positioning Beatrice as a wireless community</li> <li>✧ Cooperation with Southeast Community College programs and services</li> <li>✧ Develop Southeast Community College campus facilities and programs</li> <li>✧ Available power and utility presence and supply</li> <li>✧ Enhance Southeast Community College visibility and awareness</li> <li>✧ Training programs (local, regional, state)</li> <li>✧ Excellent school system</li> <li>✧ Build on distance learning opportunities</li> </ul>
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### 2.3 Strategic Issues

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy planning process has included participants representing diverse interests from across Gage 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 Gage 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 Gage County assist efforts to increase employment and income opportunities and serve stakeholders effectively, efficiently, and responsibly.

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

#### ✧ **Business Infrastructure**

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Gage County economic development professionals provide business service assistance and work as liaisons with other agencies, resources, programs and information

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The City of Beatrice is a business ready community with available public power, utilities, transportation, and telecommunication systems, commercial/industrial sites, and labor force development programs to support business development.

Rural community infrastructure systems have identified improvement needs which vary across the communities. Development and financing of infrastructure will require cooperative efforts on the part of public and private entities.

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Gage County has developed and enacted county-wide rural planning and zoning to assist orderly development outside incorporated communities.

## ✧ Industrial Development

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Transportation services and site-ready industrial facilities to serve existing and prospective business and industries are identified priorities.

Gage County has an established Farm and Garden Equipment and Machinery manufacturing cluster located near the industrial parks.

Gage County is working to develop an alternate route to serve and enhance existing, new and prospective industrial areas in Beatrice by redirecting truck traffic from the Main Street District. A phased development of the alternate route is planned with county funding identified at this time.

Rural communities lack readily available industrial sites and resources, thus it is vital that Gage County partner with private and public sector to address this issue.

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Railroad line capacity in the Gage County Industrial Park is identified as a planned improvement to serve a biodiesel manufacturing facility being developed.

On a county-wide basis, railroad transportation service has been affected by rail line abandonment.

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Existing utility providers are ready and able to serve increasing industrial demands.

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Value-added agricultural manufacturing represents a growing industry in Gage County and the region. Two manufacturing enterprises (a Beatrice biodiesel plant and an Adams ethanol plant) are currently being developed.

## ✧ Community Infrastructure

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Deferred investment in community-based infrastructure systems has resulted from short term goals to maintain affordable user fees.

While the City of Beatrice and Gage County have recorded population gains, smaller communities face a barrier to financing public infrastructure improvements due to declining population counts, lower-incomes and elderly residents on fixed incomes.

Infrastructure systems within some communities have reached their original design life and capacity, and have difficulties operating within the parameters of their regulatory authorization.

The necessity of eventually extending, enhancing or replacing these infrastructure systems will pose a mammoth commitment and economic challenge for these local governments.

Rural Gage County communities lack the necessary resources and infrastructure plans to be eligible for cost-sharing assistance through local, regional, state and federal sources.

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Water availability is an issue in south and east areas of Gage County. Existing consolidated water systems serve four incorporated communities (Barneston, Blue Springs, Filley and Virginia) and rural users.

Provision of affordable basic community services impact residents and the economic atmosphere within the county.

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Affordable housing opportunity is an identified need throughout the county. Housing development strategies have been implemented but are not county-wide nor with sufficient resources to meet the need.

Examples of housing programs include targeted first time homebuyer, rehabilitation, weatherization, and energy efficiency.

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Availability of appropriate housing for specific market segments and tenure is an identified concern, for example, speculative housing units in mid-to-upper price ranges, special needs housing, and elderly housing.

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Opportunities for new housing construction exist and are being realized, although not throughout the county.

## ✧ **Transportation System**

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Gage County has an excellent network of roads and highways serving communities from all points of the compass. This network affords area communities opportunities for development, both business and residential.

The Homestead Expressway (US Highway 77 – a four-lane expressway) links the micropolitan Beatrice area with the Lincoln metropolitan area, providing a commercial corridor that can be further developed to benefit the area businesses, industries and residents.

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Intergovernmental coordination among local, state, and federal government agencies and the private sector serving the transportation needs of Gage County enables economic development.

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The transportation system is a vital resource for the tourism industry. The Heritage Highway (US Highway 136), Nebraska State Highway 4, and the Homestead Expressway Corridor not only provide convenient access to Gage County communities and attractions but also provide tourism related opportunities.

The Homestead Corridor Trail is being developed on approximately 60 miles of an abandoned rail line through Gage County. The trail will extend from Lincoln, Nebraska to Marietta, Kansas. A link is planned to the Homestead National Monument, west of Beatrice.

Development of an “Education Parkway” is planned for the Homestead National Monument. This feature will run from Plymouth-to-Beatrice on the existing Nebraska State Highway 4 route and present a theme of agricultural progress initiated with the passage of the Homestead Act. Relocation of the existing Nebraska State Highway 4 near Homestead National Monument to a route north of the existing roadway.

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The Beatrice Municipal Airport is a vital transportation link to the community and surrounding area. The airport is adequate to accommodate almost all single, turbo prop and business jets.

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The City of Beatrice and Gage County are served by a Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad branch line. Local officials should continue to facilitate a blend of rail and truck intermodal transportation services to benefit business and industry and commercial activities.

## ✧ Labor Force

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A low unemployment rate in Gage County and surrounding area is a constraint to economic development. Gage County economic development officials have prioritized recruitment and targeting objectives as a result of the available labor supply.

Recruitment efforts are cognizant of the need to complement but not compete with existing enterprises' labor needs.

Business prospects are approached based on the quality of jobs rather than the quantity of jobs.

Business prospects are informed of the depth of the labor market to provide perspective to the official unemployment rate.

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Labor availability is an important factor in economic development. Work force development strategies are implemented to affect both labor supply and labor demand.

Work force programs designed to improve the readiness, skills, or wages of individuals are implemented with partnering educational and work force agencies.

Work force programs designed to address the needs of employers are coordinated with area employers.

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Gage County's business community and economic development officials pursue opportunities to develop and retain the local labor force; a "grow our own" perspective.

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Mitigating and reversing the impact of the "brain drain" is an identified strategy. 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.

## ✧ Education Services

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Gage County residents are served by a broad array of education service providers, located within the county, including a community school, consolidated schools, regional education service agency, life-long learning programs.

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Southeast Community College (SCC) is poised for substantial growth over the next decade. Administration officials have worked diligently to define SCC's role and support for the regional economy.

SCC has fostered strong partnerships with area industries and Educational Service Units and four year institutions in an effort to improve delivery of educational services. SCC has been responsive to curricula requests from area economic clusters (Turf Management and Pharmaceutical Technicians) and state run colleges and universities for credit transfers.

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Southern Gage County School Districts have noted declining enrollments over the past decade. This has resulted in school consolidations in recent years. Public School District in the high growth areas of the County have experienced several years of enrollment growth, and are currently undertaking public school building programs.

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Homestead National Monument is pursuing an opportunity to expand its role in delivering educational services. Specifically, Homestead will offer adult training in area of archeology, farm implement conservation and various distance learning programs.

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## ✧ Health Care Services

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The health care sector is identified as a key economic engine in the county that also is a vital community resource supporting the larger community.

The Beatrice Community Hospital and health clinics are in the planning stages of a multi-million dollar facility expansion, specifically to its Emergency Room, Long-Term Care facilities and Information Technology Systems. Long term planning by the institution has it serving Beatrice and the immediate region while complementing other institutions located in the region.

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Beatrice Community Hospital and health clinics enjoy a full continuum of critical care services available for its residents. Challenges facing the Hospital include, growing expense associated with Regional Health Districts, Emergency Room salaries, financing of capital construction programs, Physician and professional recruitment (OB-GYN, Pediatricians, Ultrasound Technicians and Vascular Technicians), competition with Lincoln hospitals, and planning hospital services to meet changing community needs.

Beatrice Community Hospital is considering expanding its services to include a Hospice Care Program.

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Emergency medical response services are an identified concern. In particular, EMT staffing is a challenge due in part to time and training commitments demanded of volunteers.

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Gage County has recently completed its GIS addressing system, and urban address signage has been installed. GPS technology has been installed in emergency equipment to facilitate rapid response.

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Gage County is in need of adding approximately 22 outdoor warning sirens to ensure coverage in newer rural residential areas, outdoor recreational areas, and growth at the urban fringe of Gage County communities.

## ✧ Tourism Development

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

Specific tourism-related opportunities include, but are not limited to, the development of the Odell Trails Center, and the recent installation of 21 electrical sites at the Rockford State Recreation Area.

Tourism needs includes a Beatrice/Gage County Visitor's Center, extension of the existing hiking/biking trail to the City of Lincoln and Homestead National Monument, marketing of attractions/events within Gage County.

Additional tourism needs include facility improvements to Christensen Field baseball field, home to the Beatrice High School Baseball, Junior Eagles, American Legion and Beatrice Bruins teams, community parks upgrades, marketing of Gage County's geography, development of niche markets (hunting, birding, land records data base), development of support services (restaurants, lodging), explore water-based outdoor recreation and spin-off services to serve the 150,000+ annual tourists to the new Homestead National Monument Land Records Project.

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## ✧ Community Planning

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Financing for and feasibility of infrastructure development will require cooperative efforts on the part of public and private entities. Enhancing and establishing partnerships with existing and new businesses is an ongoing commitment by local and area economic development agencies.

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Railroad service has been affected by rail line abandonment in the southern part of the county. The loss of rail service will limit future economic development opportunities.

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Building sites are available in the county for expanding and new business enterprises. An inventory of existing developed sites and identified future sites is maintained.

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Due to the growth potential of Gage County, the County (and the municipalities therein) continue to maintain, and enforce their respective and current comprehensive development plan/zoning ordinance/subdivision regulations. Proper and equitable enforcement of such planning/zoning ordinances will ensure that the county will develop in a planned, organized and systematic manner.

Gage County political subdivisions continue to maintain a current Capital Improvements Program (CIP). A CIP can assist Gage County political subdivisions in achieving sound financial management practices by planning ahead for the financing of construction, major rehabilitation and other capital projects which are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Development Plan. By applying a planned schedule of expenditures for capital improvements, the subdivision can assure taxpayers that long-term expenditures can be averaged out so that major debt is not incurred all at once, and that maintenance, renewal and replacement requirements of public infrastructure are adequately addressed to protect the political subdivision's investment and maximize the useful life of facilities

## *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.

To support Gage County's efforts to serve as a leader in economic development, as a visionary regional community led by public and private partners working in collaboration. Gage County, building upon assets such as educational excellence, active leadership, lifelong learning, and attractive quality of life, is committed to building and creating long-term benefits for the communities and its citizens.

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 Gage County is framed within five broad based goals. These include:

- [] To improve the transportation infrastructure throughout the county
- [] To promote economic development building on area assets
- [] To support community infrastructure, public facilities, and housing
- [] To promote high quality of life by developing community and regional resources
- [] To support educational and workforce development

These five 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.

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

1. To continue maintenance and improvements of the county-wide transportation infrastructure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Develop routes supporting economic development initiatives</li> <li>◇ Provide safe and efficient industrial park routes</li> <li>◇ Enhance routes supporting area attractions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Promote upgrades to alternate routes connecting to the expressway</li> <li>◇ Develop highway interchanges at Beatrice</li> <li>◇ Support enhanced rail service</li> <li>◇ Develop county-wide non-motorized trail plan</li> </ul>

2. To promote economic development building on area assets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Build on existing industry clusters</li> <li>✧ Support value-added agriculture</li> <li>✧ Promote our natural, cultural and heritage resources</li> <li>✧ Support education and workforce development initiatives</li> <li>✧ Promote business succession</li> <li>✧ Promote tourism</li> <li>✧ Partner with the City of Beatrice, villages/towns in Gage County, Beatrice Area Chamber, Main Street, business leaders, educators, workforce development, healthcare, utilities, state and business and industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Assist manufacturing industry development</li> <li>✧ Continue to support economic development services</li> <li>✧ Promote natural resource development</li> <li>✧ Enhance availability of industrial facilities</li> <li>✧ Support business retention activities</li> </ul>
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3. To support community infrastructure, public facilities, and housing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Promote housing opportunities</li> <li>✧ Encourage regional cooperative efforts</li> <li>✧ Develop community-business partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Enhance emergency management services</li> <li>✧ Develop rural transportation service plan</li> <li>✧ Continue county-community cooperative planning efforts</li> </ul>
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4. To promote high quality of life by developing community and regional resources

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Support health care sector initiatives</li> <li>✧ Develop outdoor recreational attractions</li> <li>✧ Promote natural resources development</li> <li>✧ Support regional tourism initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Support telecommunication development</li> <li>✧ Support planning and zoning activities</li> <li>✧ Develop youth involvement programs</li> <li>✧ Develop regional partnerships with Gage County Emergency Management Systems</li> </ul>
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5. To support educational and workforce development

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Expand educational opportunities</li> <li>✧ Enhance economic development tools</li> <li>✧ Promote entrepreneurial education</li> <li>✧ Partner with Southeast Community College</li> <li>✧ Continue collaboration with Workforce Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✧ Support distance learning opportunities</li> <li>✧ Enhance labor supply programs</li> <li>✧ Enhance labor demand programs</li> <li>✧ Develop hunting and package opportunities</li> <li>✧ Partner with county-wide public schools</li> <li>✧ Promote agri-tourism</li> </ul>
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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 Gage 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>Term</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 continue maintenance and improvements of the county-wide transportation infrastructure.				
ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
1-1	Develop Hickory (Hoag) Road as an alternate access route	County	Gage County (phased)	Long Term
1-2	Develop US Highway 77 interchanges at Beatrice	Beatrice, County, NDoR	County, City, State, Federal	Long Term
1-3	Improve northern rural residential roadways to serve increasing population densities	Private Land Owners	Private	Long Term
1-4	Coordinate community road development to support community growth	Municipal, County	Community, County, State, Federal	Long Term
1-5	Develop an alternate access route to lessen truck traffic in the Beatrice Central Business District	Beatrice, County	City, County, State, Federal	Long Term
1-6	Gage County Industrial Park service road improvements	Beatrice	City, County, State, Federal, Private	Mid Term
1.7	Adams county highway improvements	County	City, County, State, Federal	Short Term
1-8	Nebraska Highway 4 relocation serving Homestead National Monument	State	County, State, Federal	Short Term
1-9	Gage County Industrial Park railroad trackage improvements	Beatrice	City, Private, Railroad, Federal	Short Term

GOAL 1 continued: To continue maintenance and improvements of the county-wide transportation infrastructure.

ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
1-10	Develop County-wide Senior Transportation services.	County	County, Municipal, State, Federal	Long Term
1-11	Develop rural County-wide transportation services.	Public	Private, State, Federal	Long Term
1-12	Promote creation of Gage County to City of Lincoln express commuter service.	Public	Private	Long Term
1-13	Implement planned improvement strategies to enhance the Industrial Park's streets, access roadways and rail service to provide infrastructure for continued growth.	Beatrice, GCED, County	City, County, State, Federal, Private	Mid Term
1-14	Support railroad service improvements serving biodiesel and ethanol industrial development.	Public	Private, Federal	Long Term

GOAL 2: To promote economic development focused on building area strengths.				
ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
2-1	Support local and regional value-added ethanol and biodeisel production facilities.	Investment Groups	Private, NDoA	On-going
2-2	Develop agri-tourism and eco-tourism opportunities.	GCED, 5R-RCD, UNL Extension	GCED, SENTC, Private, NDED, Byway, USDA, CDBG, NSHS	On-going
2-3	Coordinate delivery of assistance and financial tools supporting business and industry.	GCED	Municipal, Private	On-going
2-4	Create a business succession program.		Chambers, Private, USDA	On-going
2-5	Build on the manufacturing base in Gage County and the region	GCED, SENDD	NDED, NDoL, USDA, SBA, NEDCO, Private, EDA	Long Term
2-6	Foster coordination between business and educational systems to meet labor force needs through career, mentoring, and apprenticeship programs.	SCC	NDoL, SCC, Schools, SBA	On-going
2-7	Continue support of quality-of-life institutions (education, civic, health, cultural & religious-affiliated organizations).	Private & Public	Municipal, Private	On-going

GOAL 2 continued: To promote economic development focused on building area strengths.				
ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
2-8	Support entrepreneurial activity and assistance programs.	GCED	NBDC, Foundations, Private,	On-going
2-9	Support implementation of the Homestead National Monument "Educational Parkway" and associated projects.	HNM, Municipal	Federal, Private, State, Municipal	Mid Term
2-10	Develop and expand health care.	Health Care Providers	Health Care Providers, Private, Federal	Short Term & On-going
2-11	Develop industrial sector initiatives that enhance and support economic development projects.	GCED	NDoL, Federal, Private	Long Term
2-12	Gage County Industrial Park service road improvements	Beatrice	City, County, State, Federal, Private	Mid Term
2-13	Develop Hickory (Hoag) Road as an alternate access route	County	County (phased)	Long Term
2-14	Develop an industrial site assessment program.	GCED	GCED, Utilities, USDA	Short Term & On-going
2-15	Support implementation of the Homestead National Monument visitor center project.	HNM, Municipal	Federal, Private, State, Municipal	Mid Term

GOAL 2 continued: To promote economic development focused on building area strengths.

ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
2-16	Work with wireless service providers to address gaps in coverage across Gage County.	Private	Private	Short Term
2-17	Promote and develop regional tourism, targeting development of niche markets such as hunters, birders, etc.	BGCCVB	Municipal, State	On-going
2-18	Support and develop tourism programs that markets Gage County's geography/location.	BGCCVB	Municipal, State	On-going

GOAL 3: To support community infrastructure, public facilities, and housing development.				
ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
3-1	Develop county housing market study program providing housing data every 2 to 3 years	GCED	Municipal, Utilities, Private	Mid Term
3-2	Develop an industrial site assessment program.	GCED	GCED, Utilities, USDA	Short Term & On-going
3-3	Develop a Community Visitation Program to market business support programs that currently exist.	GCED	GCED, NDED	Short Term & On-going
3-4	Develop and expand health care.	Public	Private, USDA	On-going
3-5	Develop Gage County policy to promote development in and around existing communities, supporting density and cost efficiencies.	County, Municipal	County	On-going
3-6	Assess water availability and capacity to serve rural areas, especially in eastern and southern Gage County.	Public	Utilities, Municipal, Private, USDA	Mid Term
3-7	Assess fiber optic communication infrastructure availability in rural communities.	Municipal	Municipal, USDA, Utilities	Long Term
3-8	Assess opportunities to support primary and secondary school's facility investments in areas with positive and negative population trends.	Schools, County	Schools, Municipal, Public	On-going

GOAL 3 continued: To support community infrastructure, public facilities, and housing development.				
ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
3-9	Continue E911 GIS addressing program and installation of location signage.	County	County, Federal	Mid Term
3-10	Develop a community infrastructure assessment program to inventory resources and needs.	GCED	Municipal, State, Federal	Long Term
3-11	Develop a county-wide comprehensive development planning and zoning services program to facilitate private investment.	Municipal	Municipal	Long Term
3-12	Promote community improvement planning and programming to improve services and amenities.	Municipal	Municipal, Utilities	On-going
3-13	Develop a marketing plan to expand residential development (and developers) in the City of Beatrice and area.	Private, Municipal	Beatrice, Municipal, NDED, USDA, FHLB, NIFA	Short Term
3-14	Promote development of new housing addressing identified affordable and appropriate housing needs.	Municipal, Private	Private, NIFA, USDA, NDED, FHLB, BVCA, SENAHC, Municipal	Short Term

GOAL 4: To promote high quality of life by developing community and regional resources.				
ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
4-1	Support Beatrice Community Hospital facility and service improvements	Hospital	Private, Federal, State	Mid Term
4-2	Support development of Homestead National Monument "Educational Parkway"	HNM	HNM, Private, Federal	Long Term
4-3	Develop Homestead Corridor Trail	Private	Private, NRD, Federal, State	Mid Term
4-4	Develop Homestead National Monument trail link to Homestead Corridor Trail	HNM, Private	Private, Federal, State	Long Term
4-5	Support comprehensive study of the Big Blue River Basin study	Local, Private	Municipal, Local, State, Federal	Long Term
4-6	Encourage and assist community-based planning and zoning process and enforcement	Municipal	Municipal, CDBG	On-going
4-7	Develop youth 'community awareness' program educating area youth on local opportunities	GCED	GCED, Private	Long Term
4-8	Support regional tourism initiatives	Byway, Municipal	BGCCVB, Municipal, Private, NDED, USDA, Byway	On-going
4-9	Continue E911 GIS addressing program and installation of location signage.	County	County, Federal	Mid Term

GOAL 4 continued: To promote high quality of life by developing community and regional resources.

<b>ID</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>	<b>Term</b>
4-10	Develop infrastructure in City of Beatrice to support "wireless community" amenity.	Beatrice	Municipal, Utilities	Mid Term
4-11	Develop County-wide Senior Transportation services.	County	County, Municipal, State, Federal	Long Term
4-12	Develop rural County-wide transportation services.	Public	Private, State, Federal	Long Term
4-13	Support Southeast Community College public-private partnerships serving residents and industry.	SCC	SCC, Public	On-going
4-14	Promote Southeast Community College services and opportunities to both public and industry.	SCC	SCC, Public	On-going
4-15	Support Educational Service Units (ESU) public-private partnerships serving area residents and schools.	ESU	ESU, Public	On-going
4-16	Support development of the Odell Trails Center facility and services.	Village of Odell	Municipal	Short Term
4-17	Develop a Gage County/City of Beatrice Visitor's Center facility.	BGCCVB	Beatrice, County, State, Federal	Mid Term
4-18	Support development of comprehensive outdoor recreation facilities, i.e., hiking/biking trails.	Public	Private, NRD, Municipal, Federal	Long Term

GOAL 4 continued: To promote high quality of life by developing community and regional resources.

ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
4-19	Support public-private organizations in developing and implementing facility plans that promote regional resource, such as Beatrice Bruins sports team.	Private	Private, Municipal	Mid Term
4-20	Support public-private partnerships in developing and conducting events serving a regional audience.	BGCCVB	Private, Municipal	On-going
4-21	Support public-private partnerships in developing tourism support services (e.g., lodging) serving a regional audience.	BGCCVB	Private, Beatrice, Municipal	On-going
4-22	Explore opportunities to develop water-based outdoor recreation resources.	BGCCVB	Private, Public	Mid Term

GOAL 5: To support educational and workforce development.				
ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
5-1	Facilitate development and awareness of job & vocational training opportunities in Gage County to reverse the “brain drain”.	GCED, SCC	Private, SCC, Schools, NDoL	Short Term
5-2	Promote private-public partnerships to develop industry cluster work force complementing existing labor skills.	GCED, Private	Private	On-going
5-3	Develop a School-to-Work program to engage the education and business sectors.	GCED, Schools	Schools, NDED, SCC, Private	Long Term
5-4	Promote life-long learning opportunities.	SCC, UNL Extension	Private, Schools, SCC	Long Term
5-5	Support Southeast Community College curricula supporting area business (Turf Management and Pharmaceutical Technician)	SCC	Private, SCC, NDoL	Short Term
5-6	Support Homestead National Monument providing adult training in areas of archeology, farm implement	HNM	HNM, Private,	Long Term
5-7	Support Gage County Economic Development work force programs to educate prospects on the depth of the labor market area.	GCED	GCED, NDoL, Private	Short Term
5-8	Promote retention and (re)training of the existing work force.	GCED	GCED, Private	On-going

GOAL 5 continued: To support educational and workforce development.

ID	Objective	Lead Responsibility	Funding Sources	Term
5-9	Enhance distance learning availability and opportunities.	Schools	Schools, SCC & Colleges, USDA, Municipal	Long Term
5-10	Promote work force recruitment activities that focus on attracting workers and their families to expand the labor force.	GCED	Municipal	On-going
5-11	Market Gage County as a quality place to live, work and invest.	GCED, SCC, Schools	Private, SCC, NDED	Long Term
5-12	Recruit businesses to Gage County that provide quality jobs for the local workforce.	GCED, SCC, County, Municipal	GCED, SCC, County, Municipal	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>
5R-RCD	<i>Five Rivers Resource Conservation District</i> Five Rivers 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.
Beatrice	<i>City of Beatrice</i>
BGCCVB	<i>Beatrice/Gage County Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</i>
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.
Byway	<i>Nebraska Byway Program - Heritage Highway Byway</i> Communities along U.S. Highway 136 from Edison (Furnas County) to Brownville (Nemaha 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 Southeast 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 (e.g., GROW Nebraska).

<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.
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.
GCED	<i>Gage County Economic Development, Inc.</i>
HNM	<i>Homestead National Monument</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.
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 in Geneva.
NDED	<i>Nebraska Department of Economic Development</i>
NDoA	<i>Nebraska Department of Agriculture</i>

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Full Name / Description</u>
NDoL	<i>Nebraska Department of Labor</i> (Nebraska Workforce Development)
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.
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>
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
Public	<i>All Public Entities</i> (Governmental and Quasi-Governmental, e.g., 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.

<u>Acronym</u>	<u>Full Name / Description</u>
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>
SENTC	<i>Southeast Nebraska Tourism Council, Inc.</i>
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.
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, Norris PPD, City of Beatrice, Aquila, etc.)