

SEND D

Southeast Nebraska Development District



Tom Bliss to Lead SENDD

The Southeast Nebraska Development District (SEND D) is pleased to announce Tom Bliss has been hired as the new Executive Director of SEND D.

Tom Bliss joins SEND D from his previous position as the Executive Director of Mo-Kan Regional Council in St. Joseph, Missouri. Mo-Kan Regional Council is a six county economic and community development program in northwest Missouri and northeast Kansas. The organization administers programs that include workforce development, Homeland Security, small business, as well as economic and community development programs. During his 14 year tenure, Bliss led Mo-Kan through significant growth, both in annual operating budget and reserves. Tom credits innovative programs and new partnerships with the organization's developmental success.



SEND D Board of Directors Chair Lisa Hurley from York County Development Corporation released the following statement: "On Thursday, March 16th, the Board of Directors voted unanimously for Tom to be our next director. He comes with high recommendations and a wealth of knowledge regarding federal programs, strong connections, and leadership skills. I would like to welcome Tom to the SEND D family, and am excited to have him start." Hurley continued with praise for SEND D staff, "I would also like to extend a thank you to Craig Eberle and the rest of the staff for their hard work during this transition period." SEND D Business Loan Officer Craig Eberle served as Interim Director during the interval preceding Tom's arrival.

Tom Bliss is eager to begin his leadership at SEND D. "I am very excited to be part of SEND D. The agency has a reputation across the Midwest as being a leader in economic and community development and housing. I truly appreciate the opportunity to help in this mission," Bliss stated.

Though Tom isn't originally from Nebraska, he does have local roots. "I have a lot of special memories of this region, because my dad was born here. As a kid, I always looked forward to visiting my grandmother who lived in Fairbury," he said.

In addition to his role at Mo-Kan, Tom Bliss has taken leadership roles in several organizations to promote economic development. He is currently serving on the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Board of Directors. Tom has also held numerous positions with the Missouri Economic Development Council, Missouri's Department of Economic Development Broadband Committee, and Missouri Association of Councils of Governments (MACOG) among other organizations.

Prior professional experiences include serving as Assistant Director at Northwest Missouri Regional Council of Governments in Maryville, MO, along with additional positions in city administration, economic development, and community development. Tom Bliss has a Bachelor of Science degree in political science and a Master of Public Administration degree, both from Missouri State University.

Tom will relocate to Lincoln and begin his leadership of SEND D on April 17, 2017. The SEND D service area should anticipate seeing Tom visiting counties and communities as he introduces himself throughout the 15 county district. He said: "I genuinely look forward to working with each community to improve the quality of life and grow our economy."

Quarterly Newsletter

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2018 Proposed Federal Budget Brings Major Cuts to Community Funding Sources

On Thursday, March 16th, President Trump released his 2018 budget plan that he titled “American First—A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again.” The President’s 2018 budget requests \$40.7 billion in gross discretionary funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). That change is a \$6.2 billion or 13.2% decrease from the 2017 annualized level. These cuts include the elimination of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which currently provides benefits to communities within the SENDD district and throughout Nebraska. The President’s budget also includes the elimination of the U. S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), which allows SENDD to facilitate economic development projects with businesses. Additional cuts to USDA -Rural Development would impact the direct small business lending and technical assistance funding that SENDD utilizes throughout the district by the elimination of discretionary activities of the Rural Business and Cooperative Service.

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) programs are administered through the State of Nebraska by the Department of Economic Development (DED). There are four entitlement communities in Nebraska that receive funds directly (Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island and Bellevue). The funds administered by DED are distributed throughout the rest of the State. In the 2017 grant cycle, the Department of Economic Development plans to award \$10,000,000 of CDBG funding throughout the State. The President’s proposed 2018 budget calls for the total elimination of the CDBG program nationwide.

Since 2014, SENDD has administered over \$7.9 million dollars in CDBG projects, including \$4.9 million dollars in local match. These projects have resulted in the rehabilitation of approximately 96 homes owned by low to moderate income residents throughout the 15 county service area. Three tourism projects have been funded in Fairbury, Nebraska City and Brownville with just over \$800,000 being matched with nearly \$600,000 in private matching funds. Eight public works projects have resulted in infrastructure improvements, a storm sewer system, a lift station and lagoon project, expansion of a wastewater treatment plant and street improvement project for a total of \$1.6 million dollars in CDBG funds and \$1.7 million dollars in matching funds. Nine downtown revitalization projects resulted in \$1.8 million dollars in CDBG funds and \$568,000 in matching funds. These projects included street and public works improvements in the downtown commercial districts in these communities as well as investment in façade improvement projects that have preserved and enhanced downtown buildings. Three planning grants in Fairbury, Nebraska City and York have resulted in \$90,000 in CDBG funds, along with \$40,500 in matching funds to create plans that will allow for further development of these communities. An economic development project combined \$350,000 in CDBG funds with \$2,000,000 in matching funds to expand a business in York and created 10 jobs.

Since 2009, SENDD has secured funding for 47 business start-up/expansion projects with EDA funds within the district. These projects included \$5.2 million dollars in public sector funds, that were matched with nearly \$22 million in private funds. These projects in 23 communities throughout the 15 county SENDD district resulted in the creation or retention of 490 jobs.

Through USDA-Rural Development funding, SENDD has responded to over 500 inquires from new and emerging small businesses in the District since 2009. We have provided varying levels of assistance to 275 new and existing small businesses, which has resulted in direct funding for over 80 small business projects.

In the coming months as the federal budget continues through the legislative process and is debated by the members of Congress that represent Nebraska, SENDD will call on local communities, counties and businesses to share the stories of how CDBG, EDA and USDA funds have helped their communities and local economy. These cuts are more than just numbers on a spreadsheet; these are real life projects that have served communities within our district from a city of 6,467 people to a village of 39 people. The 500 jobs that have been created or saved results in employed residents that contribute to the stability of our rural economies. We at SENDD will continue to fight for the resources to assist counties and communities, as we have for the past 43 years.

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2017 Grant Cycle—Program Changes and Due Dates Announced

Now is the time for member communities to begin working on the necessary steps to develop a successful grant application. This may include income surveys, blight studies, or other avenues for public input regarding specific issues and needs. Some of these steps can take several months, so beginning now can increase a community's ability to submit a timely grant application.

NAHTF

The Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund (NAHTF) deadlines have been announced for 2017 as May 26, 2017. The full application will be due by 5:00 pm on that day. Optional pre-applications were due by March 3, 2017. There is a new requirement for 2017 applications of a 10% cash match required for all Trust Fund applications.

CDBG

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development has released the award amounts and deadlines for the 2017 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding cycle:

Program	Application Deadline	Maximum Award	2017 Funds Available	Required Match
Comprehensive Development	Phase II Implementation -	\$350,000	\$2,250,000	25%
Downtown Revitalization	Implementation - September 30	\$350,000	\$1,750,000	25%
Economic Development	Open Cycle	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	100%
Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation	Pre-Application - August 4; Full Application - October 6	\$250,000	\$2,000,000	N/A
Planning	Cycle I: August 30; Cycle II: TBD if Available	\$40,000 community or county/ \$60,000 multi-community or	\$500,000	25%
Public Works	Cycle I: July 30;	\$250,000	\$1,000,000	25%
Tourism Development	Open Cycle After May 1	\$350,000	\$500,000	25%
Water/Waste Water	Open Cycle Beginning May 1	\$250,000	\$1,000,000	25%

Among the changes for the 2017 cycle, Downtown Revitalization phase I planning fund applications are now being processed with the planning category rather than as their own application. Additionally, the match for owner-occupied funds has been removed, though communities with match including in-kind contributions will be eligible for additional points. Comprehensive Development funds are only available for communities that are currently completing the pre-development stage awarded in 2016. Future awards for phase I pre-development grants will be available in subsequent years.

SENDD staff members are ready to discuss potential grant applications for projects and schedule a time to meet if possible. Feel free to contact the Lincoln Office at (402) 475-2560 or the Humboldt Office (402) 862-2201 to begin the application process. We look forward to assisting your community with your grant application needs.

CCCCFF Provides Resources for Community Projects

The Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCCFF) program provides grants of state aid for the development of civic, community, and recreation centers. CCCCFF grants are awarded to municipalities and administered by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to encourage and foster quality of life in our communities. This is a competitive program. The program operates on a two-part application process.

A municipality seeking a grant will submit a letter of intent to apply. To be considered for the program, applicants must meet eligibility requirements, provide a signed letter of intent to apply, and submit a completed application online. Eligible projects include:

- **Civic Center**—a facility that is primarily used to host conventions, meetings, and cultural events and/or a library. A civic center therefore includes space for conventions, meetings, and cultural events and/or a library.
- **Community Center**—the traditional center of a community, typically comprised of a cohesive core of residential, civic, religious, and commercial buildings, arranged around a main street and intersecting streets. A community center is therefore an area of multiple buildings with both internal and external elements. A civic center may or may not be in a community center.
- **Recreation Center**—a facility used for athletics, fitness, sport activities, or recreation that is owned by a municipality and is available for use by the general public with or without charge. A recreation center does not include any facility that requires a person to purchase a membership to utilize such facility.
- **Planning**—engineering and technical studies directly related to eligible projects.

Assistance from the fund shall not amount to more than fifty percent of the cost of construction, renovation, or expansion. The minimum amount for a non-planning grant request is \$10,000.

If your community would like to learn more about the CCCCFF program, please contact SENDD.

Roster Updates for 2017

County, City and Village Clerks — It's time to update SENDD's community roster. Please send an updated board roster including names and contact information including email addresses to Sally Bennett at sbennett@sendd.org.

OOR Projects Seeking Applicants

Funding available in Deshler, Fairbury, Fairmont, Humboldt, Nebraska City, Otoe County and Talmage

SENDD is currently seeking applications for owner occupied housing rehabilitation programs in several communities. These programs are open to income eligible homeowners within the city limits. All projects are funded 100% by grant funds. No repayment is required as long as the resident lives in the home for five years as their primary residence following completion of the project. For more information on program requirements, contact SENDD at (402) 475-2560 or contact your City/Village.

DPA Projects Seeking Applicants

Funding available in Seward County & York County

SENDD is currently seeking applications for down payment assistance programs in Seward and York Counties. The DPA with Minor Rehabilitation funds help qualified applicants by providing Down-Assistance up to 20% with a \$17,000.00 maximum toward the purchase of a primary residence home.

The program also has a conditional grant to help with minor repairs to ensure that the property meets "Housing Quality Standards" after repairs. The rehabilitation amounts are up to: \$7,500.00 - \$9,500.00 depending on the property location. All qualifications are income / asset based with a maximum purchase price of \$134,000.00. Please contact Jim Warrelmann (402-475-2560) at SENDD for more information and availability of funds in your area

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The SENDD Office in Humboldt Has Moved



After many years in our former office, the Humboldt SENDD Office is now in a new location at 804 3rd Street in Humboldt.

Crystal Dunekacke, Community Development Specialist, and Rhonda Standerford, Part-Time Office Administrator are located in this office. They are both enjoying the extra sunshine from the big windows in the new office.

The mail address will remain at PO Box 308, Humboldt, NE 68376. The phone number will also remain the same at (402) 862-2201.

Their normal office hours are from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. We invite you to stop by and check out our new location.

Southeast Nebraska Partners for Progress (P4P) - SET Plan

The Southeast Nebraska Partners for Progress group, known as P4P, consists of representatives from Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee and Richardson counties. The P4P group has recently participated in an initiative called Stronger Economies Together, known as SET. The purpose of Stronger Economies Together (SET) is to strengthen the capacity of communities in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region.

These are the focus areas identified by the process, as well as goals set for each area:

- **Manufacturing/Industry** — Create a diverse industrial, manufacturing hub in the 5-county region, utilizing a diversified workforce, to regionally sustain and grow existing and new businesses.
- **Cultural Tourism** — Through collaborations, create rich destination experiences that attract visitors and contribute to the quality of life for local citizens.
- **Workforce Education** — Through education and training, create a workforce pipeline to enhance employee recruitment, retention and engagement.
- **Entrepreneurship** — Develop an entrepreneurial culture for business creation and retention that sustains and grows our existing industries and businesses.

Currently the SET group is working on two upcoming projects. The first is a Manufacturers Summit to be held in Nebraska City in April. The group will be made up of local manufacturers who have been invited to participate in the summit to identify common strengths and challenges that these businesses encounter. This meeting is the first of its kind in and region. It should provide a dialog that will help identify needs that will be the focus of future work. The second event will be a program held at Peru State College that will bring high school guidance counselors, business teachers and entrepreneurs together in June. This group will work together to strategize what methods or programs might be effective to bring into school in the southeast Nebraska area to promote entrepreneurship for our youth. Brent Comstock of BCom Solutions, LLC is planned as the keynote speaker.

NEXT SET/P4P Meeting: Friday, May 5, 2017 at a time TBD following the NEDA conference at Lied Lodge in Nebraska City. Details will be announced in April. The public is encouraged to attend to participate.