



NETForce Meeting

January 22, 2016

Meeting at Central Community College-Grand Island - 10:00 am

Present: Steve Bors, Monica Braun, Gregg Christensen, Ben Dutton, Nancy Eberle, Kyle Gibson, Don Hulme, Cindy Johnson, Brooke Lenhoff, Doris Lux, Gene Manhart, Erin Redemske, Jim Reiff, Maggie Sather, Craig Schroeder, Angie Shaffer

Participating by teleconference: Judy Amoo, Shawn Kaskie, Angela Raby, Marilyn Schlake, Carroll Welte.

Craig Schroeder, *NETForce* chairperson, *welcomed* the participants and provided an overview of *NETForce* and the changing landscape of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education and support for entrepreneurship in Nebraska since the group first met in 2006. Craig described the changing landscape since our creation in 2006. The group was initially the vision of Tom Osborne to bring together various entities to collaborate, share, and move entrepreneurship forward, especially in rural Nebraska. *NETForce* is an informal, collaborative group of individuals who care about entrepreneurship in our state. The group does not have an operating budget, but is instead a group of passionate advocates for entrepreneurship representing educational entities, non-profit serve providers and local and state economic development entities.

The primary mission of the meeting is described in the Discussion Framework document. Craig noted that the two questions which will be focused on from that Discussion Framework are:

- What have been the most impactful results from *NETForce* to date?
- What made these efforts to impactful and should they inform our work going forward?

He indicated that group time would be spent later in the meeting to respond to those questions.

Minutes from May 1, 2015 Meeting

Nancy Eberle (previous *NETForce* Secretary and current Chair Elect) provided a brief overview of the May 1, 2015 meeting minutes. Items touched on were planning for the Entrepreneurship Best Practices Summit, the presentation by Christine Hess about the Abilities Fund, the update on the Technology Association of Nebraska by Deb Payne, presentations by Shawn Kaskie and members of ENACTUS about the University of Nebraska Kearney Center for Research and Rural Development, and updates by participants regarding their activities.

Doris Lux moved, Monica seconded approval of the minutes. Approved by acclamation.

Entrepreneurship Best Practices Summit

Nancy provided a report on the Summit that was hosted at Innovation Campus, October 21, 2016. Key points were:

- 170 registered, 20 of those were comped.
- Attendance was right around 140-142 actual participants.
- 45 of the registrations were paid through Extension.
- The Summit was planned from a starting point of having \$0 in budget from which to work.
- Key sponsors were the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City-Omaha Branch, UNL Center for Entrepreneurship, Nebraska Department of Education, Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program and IANR.
- The balance in the Summit account as of today's date is \$4211.56. This is held at the University and is available as a starting point for future Summits.

An overview of Summit evaluation comments was provided.

- Highest marks were for the Opening Keynote and Big Idea Talks.
- Participants hope that the Summit continues.
- The feeling is that it should be done again in 2016, rather than every other year in conjunction with the Rural Futures Conference.
- It was felt that confusion resulted from trying to co-brand the Summit with the Rural Futures Conference and that participants attending both were pulled in too many directions.

Observations/discussion which followed included:

- The outcome of the Summit was very positive.
- It was the first opportunity to hear from the Governor and his comments were encouraging.
- The consensus of the group was that it would be good to do it every other year, but do it again in 2016, followed by every other year in the year in which RFI did not host a Rural Futures Conference. During that year, we could possibly consider conducting webinars instead of the Summit.
- Participants indicated that they liked having the Summit connected to the Heuermann lecture as an evening activity. They liked having this as a culminating event.
- Some participants felt that Lincoln could be the location on an ongoing basis for continuity.
- Erin Redemske, on behalf of the Kansas City Federal Reserve-Omaha Branch sponsorship, felt that the Summit was very professional and that new contacts resulted from their sponsorship.
- Judy Amoo felt that October is a very tough month because of the array of events happening statewide. That sentiment was echoed by other participants.
- Dates to avoid in 2016 were the NACCE Conference, October 8-12, National Entrepreneurship Education Forum/MBA Conclave, October 9-10.
- The middle of the week should be avoided.
- The group felt that they would like to see increased participation by economic developers.
- The consensus of the group was to hold it in Lincoln, possibly at Innovation Campus (availability and cost will be explored).

Volunteers for 2016 Summit Planning Committee were: Ben Dutton, Angie Shaffer, Doris Lux, Nancy Eberle, Judy Amoo, Shawn Kaskie, Gregg Christensen, Marilyn Schlake, Carroll Welte, Sam Nelson, Maggie Sather, Tom Field, Brooke Lenhoff, Erin Redemske, Dell Gines, Craig Schroeder, Kyle Gibson, and Marilyn Schlake.

Discussion Framework Activity

The group divided into three working groups. Group facilitators were Craig Schroeder, Nancy Eberle and Gregg Christensen. See synopsis of each group's work (attached).

Grand Island Entrepreneurship Economic Development Initiative

Cindy Johnson, President of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, provided insights on the shift to supporting and attracting entrepreneurship as an economic development strategy that Grand Island has undertaken.

In 2014, the incumbent mayor had initiated the development of a strategic business development plan while there was another strategic plan being developed by the Chamber. After being "burned" by a business that opened and closed VERY quickly under the LB640 program, there was a "bad taste" left with Grand Island citizens so the best parts of the two plans have been merged into Grow Grand Island.

There are 20 initiatives in the new plan, one of which is building entrepreneurship. Cindy noted that somewhere owning your own business became perceived in the area as a default position when you couldn't find a job with an existing company. A lot of talk is done about assistance to entrepreneurs but really the need is to address the value and opportunities of entrepreneurship. They are going to the ballot in May for a Food/Beverage tax to provide funding to support initiatives as opportunities arise.

See <http://growgrandisland.com/> for more information.

Overall Mission and Goals of NETForce

The group then reviewed the mission and goals of NETForce.

The brief description of NETForce is "The Nebraska Entrepreneurship Task Force (NET Force) is an actively engaged group of collaborating partners focused on the entrepreneurial career opportunities available to Nebraska's youth and adults."

Mission

The Nebraska Entrepreneurship Task Force (NET Force) leverages resources to nurture entrepreneurship through collaboration and innovation.

Goals

The Goals as proposed by the group following this discussion are:

- Advocate for and strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem of Nebraska
- Expand entrepreneurship education/training opportunities and sharing of best practices
- Identify, coordinate and leverage resources for ongoing support of Nebraska entrepreneurs
- Locate and secure funding to further the mission
- Increase the marketing and outreach of entrepreneurial programs and services in the state
- Highlight the successes of Nebraska entrepreneurs
- Develop partnerships between education and economic development statewide

Jim Reiff moved and Brooke Lenhoff seconded to accept the changed goals as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Structure of NETForce

It was the consensus at this time to leave the structure as it is now. No changes proposed.

Future Meetings

It was suggested that a list be developed to who to invite to the next meeting. “Everyone bring one” was suggested in which each person bring a guest to the next meeting who might be interested in joining the work of NETForce.

Agenda topics to draw people to meetings were discussed. Participation is driven by location and a “draw” or special event/activity/focus is needed.

We need to refine sharing that we want to do at the meetings. It is important to give agenda time to those who have something they really want the group to dig into/focus on.

Future locations proposed for meetings included Columbus’s new Technology Center and Maker Space, “Do” Space in Omaha at 72nd and Dodge, Catalyst in Lincoln.

At the next meeting, the group will focus on refining an Action Plan for NETForce. It was suggested that we plan an official invitation for local legislators and policy makers to hear about our mission. Bullet points could be done around that at the meeting.

Nebraskaentrepreneurship.com Website

Ben Dutton provided information on his work to redevelop this website. The website maintenance and content development was formerly paid through the University of Nebraska President’s office under the auspices of Pete Kotsiopoulos. The site has been “dormant” for quite some time. Ben is now working on revamping the site. Items he wants to incorporate or enhance include:

- Calendar of events happening around the state.
- Making the site a NETForce site/University collaboration
- Incorporating revenue stream to support the site (sponsorships?)
- Drawing attention to the resources area of the site.
- Opportunities might include businesses for sale, franchise opportunities, etc.
- Online forum in which those who want can pose and respond to questions.

It was suggested that an inventory of items or things to see or do for NETForce meetings be developed.

Kyle Gibson, Craig Schroeder, Shawn Kaskie, Nancy Eberle, Ben Dutton and Steve Bors volunteered to work together to look at the website and explore possibilities.

Brief Updates

Doris Lux is hosting a day seminar, "Making a Living with Art Business Skills" at Central Community College. CCC will also be hosting a Shark Tank March 16, with a pre-Shark Tank March 2, 2016.

The UNL Center for Entrepreneurship will be hosting EntrepreneurDays@UNL April 5-6, 2016. See <http://cba.unl.edu/outreach/center-for-entrepreneurship/student-programs-and-competition/entrepreneur-days/> for more information.

The Southeast Community College Entrepreneurship Center will be celebrating its 10th anniversary.

MarkeTECH will be taking place April 26-27, 2016 in Kearney. Information about the event can be found at <http://markettechconference.org/>.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City will be hosting a Growing Entrepreneurial Communities Summit at the Federal Reserve on May 4-5, 2016. The event is a partnership with US Sourcelink, Network Kansas, the Kauffman Foundation, the Lowe Foundation and the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. This is a very practitioner centric summit and should be of interest to Nebraska entrepreneurship service providers, NETForce members, etc. Information and registration can be found at <https://www.kansascityfed.org/events/2016/growing-entrepreneurial-communities-05-2016>.

The new Grow Your Own: Entrepreneurship Based Economic Development for Local Communities ebook is now available.

Items for Planning Purposes

The NETForce awards application process needs to be reviewed and information and forms for applying for those awards needs to be made publicized ASAP. A committee needs to look at this.

The next meeting site should possibly be in Eastern Nebraska, possibly at the Omaha "Do" Space or one of the Omaha high schools such as Omaha Benson or Omaha North.

Potential date proposed was May 20, 2016.

Activity Synopsis Reports and Handouts

Activity Synopsis Reports and related handouts submitted by NETForce members for this meeting will be accessible at the Nebraska Entrepreneurship Education website home page for NETForce at <http://www.education.ne.gov/entreped/NETforce.html>.

These include:

- Central Community College – Doris Lux
- Western Nebraska Community College – Judy Amoo
- Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City-Omaha Branch – Erin Redemske
- SCC Entrepreneurship Center – Brooke Lenhoff
- REAP Women’s Business Center – Monica Braun
- Nebraska Extension – Ben Dutton
- SBI-Hastings – Don Hulme
- NDE Activities/Resources/Courses – Gregg Christensen
- 2015-16 Entrepreneurship Competitions and Conferences – Gregg Christensen

Respectfully submitted

Gregg Christensen, Secretary

DRAFT