



## **NETForce Meeting**

**May 20, 2016**

Meeting at Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City-Omaha Branch - 10:00 am

Present: Erin Redemske, Nancy Eberle, Gregg Christensen, Jim Reiff, Kyle Gibson, Dale Eesley, Melina Arroyo, Kathy Eitzmann, Steve Bors, Heather Nelson, Marilyn Schlake, Haley Ehnce, Janelle Anderson Ehrke, Brooke Lenhoff, Dell Gines, Erica Wassinger

Participating by conference call: Don Hulme, Judy Amoo,

Nancy Eberle, NETForce chair-elect, welcomed the participants. Erin Redemske provided greetings on behalf of the Federal Reserve and general information about the building.

Dell Gines began the meeting with an overview of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City and the Omaha Branch with an overview of activities in which he and the Federal Reserve have been engaged. He indicated he and the Federal Reserve are 1010% supportive of the work of NETForce and want to be a great partner.

Key points he mentioned during his presentation included:

Dell Gines greeted the group

- Support 1010%, want to be a great partner.
- Conversations have been started around building entrepreneurial eco-systems.
- He has spoken on the topic in over 18 states, 18 communities, 12,000 people.
- At some point, when something isn't working for economic development, you have to do something different. Communities and states need to do that through entrepreneurship.
- His message is resonating as evidence that the Kansas City Summit on Entrepreneurship exceeded all expectations.
- There was so much regional interest in the message of building entrepreneurial eco-systems that they decided to host the Summit in Kansas City.
- He has 50 pages of raw notes to pull together. Gregg will share all the info that Dell sent him. <http://www.joinsourcelink.com/best-practices/best-practices/2016/05/17/highlights-from-growing-entrepreneurial-communities-summit#.V7zRFGGr2Yz6>
- It's the durability of the network that makes the difference.
- At the Fed, he can challenge communities and "take the bullets"
  - Difference is leadership.
  - We are the leaders.
  - We are the champions.
  - Federal Reserve is the voice of advocacy.
- He shared publications he has written.

Dell had to depart early so that he could watch his daughter at the State Track Meet. The group wished him well and thanked him for his presentation and ongoing support of the work of NETForce.

The group then did brief introductions (name, title, responsibilities).

### **Entrepreneurship Best Practices Summit**

Key information was shared about the 2<sup>nd</sup> Entrepreneurship Best Practice Summit scheduled for November 17 at Nebraska Innovation Campus.

- Dell will be the opening keynote speaker.
- Nancy reviewed the schedule and potential speakers with the group.
- Dale asked whose conference this is; who is the target audience. The collaborating partners were discussed and the key target audiences for which it is being designed (educators, economic developers, community developers, local and state policy makers and entrepreneurial advocates).
- Conference planning team is reaching out to various entities and is looking for supporting sponsorships.
- Registration fee will be \$50.00
- The budget is built around a \$10,000 bottom line.
- Last year the Summit made a profit and this is available for use this year as “seed money.”
- It was noted that it would be good to share information about the Summit at the Governor’s Economic Development Summit scheduled for the summer.

### **Awards**

A draft of revised/update NETForce Awards criteria was shared by Gregg Christensen for review and suggested modifications by the group. It was noted that the awards are to recognize outstanding entrepreneurship advocacy and education in Nebraska.

The group discussed the official name of the new award that last year was titled the Nebraska Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame Gregg Christensen Distinguished Service Award. The consensus of the group was to shorten the name to Gregg Christensen Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame Award. It was noted that the award does not need to be given every year. Recipients must have given exemplary service to entrepreneurship in Nebraska over an extended period of time.

It was suggested that NETForce pursue additional sponsors for the awards given. Currently Nebraska Enterprise Fund provides the funding for the purchase and engraving of the awards. Suggested sponsors to reach out to were Bank of the West, Wells Fargo, First National Bank, SAC Federal Credit Union and Mutual of Omaha.

### **Mission**

The group then discussed the mission of NETForce based on the discussions that took place at the previous meeting. Jim Reiff moved, Brooke Lenhoff seconded to reaffirm the current description, mission and goals of NET Force.

## **Mission**

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

## **Goals**

Goals voted on and adopted at the last meeting were:

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

Discussion then moved to financial and policy/bylaws of the group. Currently we are a collaborative group, not a 501c3. The question was posed as to whether a donation account could be established. A suggestion was made to consider options to do this through the UNL Foundation, Nebraska Community Foundation or Nebraska Extension. Nancy said she would look into possible options.

A note: a suggestion was made to add wording including Developing Statewide Partnership and Economic/Community Development to our goals.

## **Special Presentation by Erica Wassinger, Omaha Startup Collaborative**

Erica Wassinger, from the Omaha Startup Collaborative, shared information about the work of the Collaborative. She discussed the phases of entrepreneurship around which they are centering their work:

- Discovery phase
- Validation phase
- Scalability phase

Information about the recently hosted first Startup Week-Omaha was shared. She noted that the themes and tracks were:

- Corporate innovation
- Startup methodology
- Branding and Sales

There were twenty (20) official co-organizers. Anyone who could help DID help. The average number of events attended per person was four. The concern is that there are no “new” entrepreneurs. The struggle is to create a density of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs feel very isolated. The Startup Week and the Collaborative offer opportunities to connect and to build the community of entrepreneurs.

## Omaha Startup Collaborative Background

- Erica and Mark Hassebrook co-founded the Collaborative.
- It is meant as a destination hub.
- They built a community before they had a building.
- The belief is that young businesses have potential to create many jobs quickly.
- The goal is to improve the odds of growth for entrepreneurs.

Support of their work by NETForce members attending events was encouraged. One event noted was One Million Cups. NETForce members are welcome to attend.

The need to support entrepreneurs in rural areas was discussed. Erica expressed the desire to reach out to rural entrepreneurs and “mixing” the rural and urban communities more.

Suggestions of valuable ideas to do this included “lunch and learns”, using educators, gathering startup stories and promoting and hosting pitch competitions.

Doing a call-in scheduled presenter and making entrepreneurs across the state more aware of opportunities were suggested. Other suggestions about this included:

- Not all events have to have content.
- Don't worry about over-producing.
- Need to promote across the board.
- Create a promotional kit (easy, user-friendly)

Erica noted that there is a difference between Startup Week and Startup Weekend.

Discussion then centered around post-Startup Week Omaha.

- Density is the issue
- Focus on doing it virtually
- Google hangout
- Still need person to person interaction
- Could do quarterly/monthly webinars/sharing sessions.
- There are 2 eco-systems in NE (tech eco-system; non-tech eco-systems)
- Success in rural areas is vital and we need to gather and share ideas for this target group.
- One comment was that if 1 million cups is all tech-focused, it's not worth our time. Entrepreneurship is not just about high tech.
- Events have to be more inclusiveness and appeal to all age levels.
- Is there a way to morph the two eco-systems together?
- We need both.
- NETForce is viewed as our “trade association”
- A stand-alone website could be the best vehicle for enhancing the work of NETForce and promoting the activities and mission.

Communications currently used for outreach discussed were Nebraskaentrepreneurship.com, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

## **Reports by NETForce Members**

### Nebraska Enterprise Fund-Jim Reiff

- 3-5 sessions celebrating sales have been done.
- Biggest team ever is on hand.
- 40 loans generated between January 1<sup>st</sup> and May 20<sup>th</sup>

### UNL Center for Entrepreneurship-Kyle Gibson

- Sam Nelson has been named as the new Director.
- They will be hiring a Professor of Practice-Family Business.
- Rose Graves will be retiring June 1<sup>st</sup>. Members were encouraged to drop her a line.
- A Minor in Entrepreneurship has been approved.

### UNO Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship-Dale Eesley

- Starting 1<sup>st</sup> Learning/Living Community of Entrepreneurship
- 8 students signed up, 16 next year
- Would love to have them
- \$2,500 scholarships innovative/creative in any major
- Impact is on parents

### GROW Nebraska-Janell Anderson-Ehrke

- T-3 trainer
- Doing work with young entrepreneurs
- Amazon store is seeing growth
- Focusing on how to use Amazon
- March 16-MarkeTech
- Grow Nebraska is helping entrepreneurs market themselves
- Close to breaking 400 members

### Youth Entrepreneurship Curriculum Team

- Trying Startup Weekend (tried at McCook, but did not get any students interested)
- Going to try another format
- Two new faculty members focused on entrepreneurship, merchandising,
- Human Resources for Small Businesses online curriculum
- 5 county region economic development planning; finalizing strategic plan
- Working with the high schools (Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson)
- Workforce development; Manufacturing is a huge problem
- Entrepreneurship for Hispanic Speakers
  - 5 weeks, at Boys Town, current business owners & those interested in starting a business
  - 12 individuals; 4 spaces available (8-10:00 a.m.)

SCC Entrepreneurship Center – Steve Bors

- Business of Food Seminar was a great success and fulfilled an obvious need
  - 45 people there; food-based businesses were a major audience.
- Business of Art Seminar had 60 people last year.
- They are working at new SCC Learning Centers (York, NE City, other)
- Coffee chats with speakers are conducted each week on Thursday.

Kevin Hagemoser

- Independent consultant on transitioning businesses,
- Working in rural Nebraska

Federal Reserve

- Next resource to be available, J Starts the Business
- Fully animated lesson plans, interactive
- Target date for completion
- Michelle Wolf

UNL Extension – Nancy Eberle

- Working on fully digital ESI curriculum
- Putting in more activities, interactivity
- Looking for pilot sites
- Youth Entrepreneurship Team (Elementary Tech Box, Adventure Day for Middle School Students)

Nebraska Department of Education-Gregg Christensen

- See submitted Activities Summary Report

The next meeting site could be the Holthus Center. September 23<sup>rd</sup> was decided as the date. Featuring local entrepreneurs again was suggested.

Hosting a meeting at CCC-Hastings for a future meeting was suggested.

**Respectfully submitted**

Gregg Christensen, Secretary