

## **NETForce Meeting**

**Friday, February 2, 2018**

**Informal Networking – 9:00-9:30 a.m. (CST)**

**Meeting – 9:30 a.m. (CST) – 2:45 p.m. (CST)**

**Rooms 176-177**

**Lower Level of Student Center**

**Central Community College-Columbus**

Columbus, NE

The meeting convened at 9:30 a.m.

Nancy Eberle called the meeting to order.

Doris brought greetings on behalf of CCC-Columbus Administration.

Present: Steve Bors, Brooke Lenhoff, Linda Hartman, Jim Reiff, Cathy Lang, Monica Braun, Gregg Christensen, Nancy Eberle, Doris Lux, Dagen Valentine, Heidi Garvin, Don Hulme. Attending via WebEx conference call Judy Amoo

Everyone was asked to introduce themselves.

### **Minutes**

The minutes were distributed in advance and will be made available via a Google Drive. No motion was made at this time to approve the minutes.

### **Entrepreneurship Summit**

There were 41 responses to the conference evaluation. Overall, the evaluations were very high. Overall, participants felt that it was very well put together and organized. People liked the amount of networking time. The panel was very well received. The food was well received. The keynote was the highest ranked part of the Summit.

The number of attendees was 100. There was a good mix of educators and economic developers. We still need to engage more economic developers and we are missing the policymaker target audience. Cathy Lang suggested that we invite the staff of the senators in addition to the senators. In addition, invitations should be extended to counsels of committees and each senator's policy person. Cathy can help with that directory.

Dagen Valentine will be working with the marketing piece for 2018.

Brooke Lenhoff will assist with logistics when meetings held at SCC Entrepreneurship Center and take minutes.

Marilyn Schlake will schedule and chair committee meetings and be the liaison with the University for budget and handling registration.

The group felt that Sched worked very well. Marilyn indicated it took 12-15 hours to get the information up on the Sched program.

Brooke was complimented for keeping the website current and Nancy was thanked for her work on the Summit Facebook page.

Financial Report – Nancy reported that we still do not have registrations from Extension. As of 2/2/18 the Summit's account balance is \$12,637.78. That is up from last year. Nancy noted we are still missing the \$3 registration fees charge for handling registrations. Andy Stoll did not charge for his keynote and no stipends were claimed.

The Holthus Center in York is where the 2018 Summit will be hosted. Dates will be either October 30 or November 1.

Concerns were expressed about retaining people at the conference in the afternoon.

Ideas and suggestions offered included:

- Having the Big Idea Speakers during the luncheon
- Having **Community** Pitches at the closing sessions focusing on new best practices in creating local entrepreneurial ecosystems
- Possibly offering prize money or free registration for pitch winners
- We need to book a keynote speaker for 2018. Several of our members will be attending the April Entrepreneurship Eco-system conference in K.C. which may have potential keynote speakers we could invite. Dave Rippe was mentioned as a possible speaker
- The question was posed on how to get college students interested and participating. This topic will be one that the planning committee
- Judy Amoo suggested incorporating fun into the conference. She mentioned having a comedy routine about entrepreneurship as well as music. Another suggestion was to have Jenna Houston from American Idol come and sing. Another suggestion was to have a young magician from Holdrege and a contestant for America's Got Talent, Joe Brogie, <https://www.joebrogie.com/>. He is a Northeast Nebraska magician and could talk about his entrepreneurial journey. Other suggestions were the balloon lady in Central City and a young tap dancer from Morrill, Kyle Van Newkirk who might provide entertainment. He does perform for local events.
- Humanities Nebraska has a Speakers Bureau we might want to check with. Cathy will ask since she is on their Board.

Lisa Tschauner shared the video that was created about the conference. They will be doing some additional work on it, especially removing clips that seemed to brand it as a conference for entrepreneurs.

The topic of rebranding the conference to make it clearer that it is focused on best practices in creating robust entrepreneurial ecosystems was raised again. The consensus was that we do need to reconsider the branding of the conference to be clearer.

One concern mentioned in hosting the conference in Kearney was that there were too many events in Kearney that week and probably decreased our numbers.

Cathy Lang volunteered to be on the Planning Committee.

The next Planning Committee meeting will be 1:30 on March 1 in Room F at the Holthus Center in York. The meeting will start off with a tour of the Center and then reconvene in Room F at the Center.

## Report on NEED Ecosystem Prospectus – Catherine Lang (NBDC)

It was mentioned that Steve Bors, Doris Lux and Gregg Christensen had volunteered to serve in some capacity (committee work) for the NEED planning.

Cathy said that the idea for the NEED Ecosystem came out of a conversation with NBDC and Nebraska Extension (connected with Don Macke's work on community vitality).

They are currently working on two pieces:

- Creation of a web platform for the entrepreneurial eco-system in Nebraska. Items noted during the discussion included:
  - We know there is an incredibly vibrant entrepreneurial eco-system in Nebraska.
  - The Nebraskaentrepreneurship.com website (<https://www.neentrepreneurship.com/>) is minimally maintained and is basically stagnant. Ben Dutton does try to update it on occasion.
  - The Omaha Chamber has something similar.
  - There is an energy growing to create a platform for Omaha entrepreneurial service providers.
  - Don Macke and Cathy Lang will fund the University piece of this. The platform that has been chosen to pilot is SourceLink. It would first map the university resources, then it would be determined if a collaborative partnership could be created for other service providers to join in. If it works, the plan would be to build it out.
  - Cathy has had conversations with others around the nation and the opinions about SourceLink have been very positive.
  - One idea would be to include a calendar to assist all of our work.
  - Jim Reiff indicated that one of this challenges he is concerned about is that we not let this be a siloed platform. It will be important to figure out how to make it most user-friendly. There is a need for it to be super specific about what needs to be on it and who can be on this platform. Relationships are key to its success.
  - Dagen Valentine mentioned AI Chatbot as a way to guide people to the resources on the website.
  - Multiple comments were made that it needs to be statewide in scope.
  - The biggest challenge is the price tag. Foundations might need to be brought to the table.
  - Informal conversations have been taking place with the Peter Kiewit Foundation.
  - NBDC has pledged to be the host.
  - Cathy mentioned the experience of one state that had it, loved it, then the governor cut the budget causing them to have to rebuild it completely.
  - The platform allows each community to have its own branded entry point.
  - SourceLink builds the platform and then it is sustained by the state entity purchases its services.
  - Lincoln has its Startup LNK as an example of a locally created website.
  - It could be a subscription service that communities could join.
  - Entrepreneurs, business, community, economic development would be the focus points.
  - Heidi Garvin mentioned a geofilter might be incorporated. Tracking data and keywords are used to map the ecosystem to help identify gaps in service providers.
  - Kauffman Foundation might be a funding source to explore.
  - Nancy posed the question of how this will help very small communities. Doris thought the community colleges could be the key assistance points to meet this challenge.
  - It was noted that a conversation with Jeff Yost and the Community Foundation might be productive.

- Don Hulme posed the question of “Who is the customer for this?” The response was that it would be for entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship advocates and service providers, and economic developers.

## **Member Update Reports (Part 1)**

### **Dagen Valentine – Extension**

Extension has wrapped up its 2017 data collection and the Impact Report is online. InVenture Day has been very successful. Almost 1,000 youth in were engaged during 18 Days across the state. Post-surveys indicated 83% of the participants know what it means to be an entrepreneur. TecBox is an elementary level innovation activity in which they design a game. 51 youth participated in that (3-5 graders). 81% understood what it means to be an entrepreneur. ESI Digital has finished the pilot phase. Looking at pricing structure so it would be an allowable expenditure.

Eleven ESI camps were held across the state Blueprint sold 115 units sold.

Inventure Day training will be held on February 22<sup>nd</sup> for educators and community leaders.

The Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference will be April 4-5.

Extension is working with the Library Commission on Innovation Studios. The next five will be in South Sioux City, Neligh, Broken Bow, and Bridgeport for 20 weeks beginning in April (see Dagen’s activity report for more details).

### **Judy Amoo**

The StrengthsFinder Training was nominated for an Innovation Award and won 1<sup>st</sup> place! The SCORE organization is partnering with Farm Service Agency.

### **Panel of Local Entrepreneurs**

#### **MMMW Company-Repurposing Business – Jeff Lacy (mmmw.co)**

- Jeff was born in Osceola, Nebraska.
- Attended the Art Institute of Colorado in Industrial Design.
- Joined a marketing firm after graduation.
- Interested in Reclaim – repurposing furniture and buildings.
- Had an opportunity to move from California to build his parents’ house.
- He enjoys passing the history of the materials used on to the new owners.
- His sources are primarily Colorado and Texas based.
- He became really serious about entering this business when a barn was being burned down. In California, a barn is worth \$25,000, so he could see the value in reclaiming the materials in these old structures.
- He operates from an 18,700 square foot building in Osceola.
- They are working on making architectural panels out of corn stalks now.
- They use all natural materials (including coloring from grass, tea, etc.)

### **Minute Smile Photo Booth –Rob Rigert**

- His business is providing photo entertainment using an 8’ x 8’ booth that can accommodate a full wedding party inside.
- He draws upon his multiple talents of computer work and farm work and brings them to bear along with leadership and authority.

- He has attended both CCC-Columbus and Bellevue University.
- Rob mentioned he had a horrible experience in high school.
- Of special note is that he took an Entrepreneurship course from Doris at CCC-Columbus and he said it was one of the best things he did.
- His major at Bellevue was marketing.
- He worked with REAP to obtain funding for two photo booths
- He noted also that he joined the Chamber right away and that it was a very positive move.

#### **Chamber's Entrepreneurship Committee – Scott Mueller**

- Scott is a farm broker by occupation.
- He was responsible for putting together the partners to refurbish and renew the Ramada Conference Center. He has been with Ramada for five years and negotiated with partners to be able to completely remodel it. It is marketed as Riverside Convention Center-Ramada Plaza as a co-branding strategy.
- He also worked with waste management and feed yard composting as an entrepreneurial enterprise
- In addition he helped start Great Plains State Bank with 3 branches.
- He is very much involved with working with the community to help find people to start or take over businesses.
- He is also always looking for opportunities that could start up and make money immediately.

#### **Member Update Reports (Part 2)**

##### **Steve Bors – Southeast Community College Entrepreneurship Center**

- The Focus Suites are full with a waiting list 3 deep.
- The quality of business and scalability are major benefits of the focus suite concept.
- They now have a newspaper startup, LNK News that just published its first issue.
- He thanked Brooke and Kat for helping redesign the Focus Suites to be more attractive for the occupants.

##### **Linda Hartman – Southeast Community College**

- A new instructor is teaching the Business Plan course
- The Curriculum is on track, having been updated in 2017.
- SCC will be converting from quarters to semesters starting in 2019.
- Gregg asked if the 2017 course syllabi could be sent to him. Linda said she would do that so they can be posted on the Nebraska Entrepreneurship Education website.

##### **Jim Reiff – Nebraska Enterprise Fund**

- They are working on quarterly calendar now
- Lots of movement in North Omaha is being seen.
- They have hired Juan Sandoval from REAP.
- He noted they are seeing better coordination in Omaha with NBDC, Chamber, and SCORE.
- They are exploring taking a bus from Omaha to attend MarkeTech. They will know in the next few weeks if the bus will be a go.

##### **Cathy Lang – NBDC**

- NBDC's Economic Impact Study is just done.
- NBDC is now fully staffed with a Lincoln Director hired.

- They will be getting a marketing person in place soon.
- They are working on an EDA (Economic Development Administration) grant, a division of the Department of Commerce.

#### **Monica Braun – REAP**

- They have hired two new staff.
- An online marketing strategy workshop was held in West Point.
- Online Marketing Strategies scheduled for Holdrege, February 15, 2018.
- Social Media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter for Biz) scheduled for Wood River, February 27, 2018.
- Business Plan Basics scheduled for O'Neill, Feb. 22, Mar. 1, 8, 22, April 5, 2018.
- Online Marketing Strategies scheduled for Nebraska City, April 4, 2018.
- The Women Entrepreneurs Conference will be hosted in Kearney, April 11 at the Holiday Inn Convention Center.
- Facebook for Business, Hebron, April 16, 2018.

#### **Nancy Eberle – Independent Consultant and Recently Retired Special Projects Coordinator for Extension**

- ESI Digital is now available. It is much more interactive and affordable.
- Pilots were started this fall.
- Good feedback is being received from students and instructors.
- They have 3 more pilots to go then it will be available.
- A major positive event was that National 4H picked up LEAP and Blueprint In November.

#### **Doris Lux – Central Community College Columbus**

- She has five students in EIA.
- The Showcase is Sunday afternoon, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2:00-5:00 in Red Apple Farmers Market.
- They are offering Table Talks once a month through SCORE luncheons at the Center.
- A bilingual assistant has been hired.
- Doris will be retiring fall of 2018 but will be President of SCORE.
- She is working with 27 businesses in Columbus and Central City, 60-70% of these are Hispanic-owned.
- In addition, she is beginning to do Assessment Workshops as well as continuing BP 10 training

#### **Heidi Garvin – Grow Nebraska**

- They are now their own Foundation program.
- MarkeTECH conference is scheduled for March 15<sup>th</sup> in Kearney.
- They are flying in Instagram and Google experts.
- Member training for GROW Nebraska members has been expanded.
- Third Thursday trainings are ongoing.
- They will be bringing in Ben Williamson from Invest Nebraska for a webinar.
- Grow is closing the GI store but expanding the Kearney store.

#### **Don Hulme – Central Community College-Hastings**

- The Incubator Space has one occupation (Auction House). The college is happy to have them there.
- Big Idea Hastings was done in October with 20 people.
- They narrowed it down to 12 and gave awards to 5.
- Uptop Beehives is an idea that is being explored (not in Incubator).
- He also reported they now have a Makerspace with the Hastings Library.

## **Gregg Christensen – Nebraska Department of Education**

- February is the annual national celebration of Career and Technical Education. CTE (Career and Technical Education) Month is a public awareness campaign that takes place each year in February. This year's tagline is "Prepared Student. Great Futures." Information and resources to help celebrate CTE can be found at <https://www.education.ne.gov/nce/marketing-your-cte-program/>.
- A new, fun activity added this year for Nebraska is Show Us Your CTE video contest. To kick off CTE month NDE is asking local schools' help in showcasing it to the rest of the nation with a "Show Us Your CTE" video!
- Filming of the Nebraska Career Tours Videos (Round 5) continues. The target date for the videos to be finalized and the Teacher Discussion Guides and Student Viewing Guides to be drafted is June 1.
- reVISION continues to provide Nebraska schools with the opportunity to analyze and transform their current career education systems in order to improve their ability to educate a qualified workforce that meets industry needs. The importance of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education are considered. (See reVISION flyer for more details). reVISION has received national attention including coverage in the New York Times and a special report published by AdvanceCTE.
- The Nebraska Career Education Conference will be held June 4-7, 2018 at the Younes Conference Center-Kearney, NE ([www.nceconference.com](http://www.nceconference.com)). Approximately 650 CTE teachers, administrators, and school counselors attend each year. NETForce members are encouraged to attend.
- Gregg shared copies of the Entrepreneurship Conferences, Competitions and Events flyer 2017-2018 and the CTE on the Frontier article about Nebraska's reVISION process.

Friday, April 13<sup>th</sup> is the next NETForce meeting (Friday) at the Holthus Center in York, Nebraska.

Gregg will investigate Grand Island meeting space, September 7<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting adjourned for tours of the new CCC-Columbus STEM Manufacturing Building and the new Columbus High School and its Career and Technical Education facilities. During the latter tour, Kim Kwapnioski, Executive Director of the Columbus Public Schools Foundation provided background on the new high school's development, design and plans for the future.

**Respectfully submitted**

Gregg Christensen, Secretary