



# 2014

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

For the eleven county, Nebraska Panhandle Region of:  
Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Kimball,  
Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan and Sioux counties

Prepared by:





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# Executive Summary

## Key Themes

### Shine Theory

Throughout the CEDS process, one of the themes that resonated most with people was one of interconnectivity and interdependence. Residents in the Nebraska Panhandle realize that the strengths of neighboring communities are their own opportunities as well, and enhance the quality of life in their own community. This is the realization that each community is at its best when its neighbors are also at their best. In a sense, one community doesn't shine unless their neighbor shines. This development plan emphasizes this idea that our region can accomplish more together than its communities could with their own fragmented strategies.

### Collaborate to Compete

Closely tied to the shine theory, is the importance of collaboration. What our region lacks in critical mass of talent, training, and innovators, it must make up for in constant communication and shared goals to build a 'collective impact'. Now and in the years to come, the Panhandle region's plans and strategies must search for where value can be added or where costs can be lowered through collaboration. Through a web of formal and informal collaborations, pools of shared knowledge can begin to form creative solutions and current frameworks for action can be strengthened.

### Sustainability: Social, financial, environmental

With a generally declining population and competitive financial resources, it is imperative for communities in the Panhandle to be able to help themselves today without compromising the prosperity of future generations. It is important for communities in the Panhandle to look to the future with high aspirations but also with an acceptance of their current strengths as well as current trends. Decreasing dependency on government dollars will be a central component to sustainable social and economic development programs. Economic development activities must be in line with the strategy for the future but must also be a good fit for the community as it is today.

### Innovation and Assets

Starting with the assets of a region or community focuses the attention on the possible, rather than beginning with a broad spectrum of solutions with varying viability. Identifying and leveraging the assets already in our region one of the pillars of this plan and of development moving forward. When coupled with focused goals and a network of collaborative parties, asset based development forms the foundation for development that fits the region, and begins to turn the gears of innovation. Through leveraging the Panhandle's assets and connecting its citizens, the region can nurture an environment that cultivates innovative ideas that grow wealth and offer opportunities to Panhandle residents.

## The CEDS Process

Types of CEDS documents:

- Initial CEDS: first CEDS document
- Annual CEDS report: Annual review and update on progress
- Revised CEDS: 5 year update; this document will be the latest revision since 2008.

Rather than just a document, this revised Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the Nebraska Panhandle is a process. The CEDS assesses current problems and opportunities and brings citizens in the region together to collaborate on how we can create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. What results is hopefully a vision for the future, a road map for how to get there, and the partnerships to make it happen.

The development of the plan was a coordinated effort between a group of community leaders and interested citizens, who all have an interest in the growth of the region. The process began with a survey of citizens and elected officials in the Nebraska Panhandle which set the tone for and narrowed the focus of the remaining public engagement.

Key goals of the strategy formulation and implementation are to create higher wage jobs, cultivate new ideas that grow wealth, collaborate to more efficiently meet our needs, and improve the quality of life while protecting and enhancing both the natural and built environments. These interests were represented by the over 75 people who were involved in public meetings around the region and by the smaller, more nimble steering committee. The input from the public meetings, steering committee, and key interviews drove the framework which focuses around six areas of investment and activity: *industry growth, business growth, infrastructure, education, skill training, and housing.*



The process that led to the development of this document took place over the course of eight months from October 2013 to May 2014. This plan outlines a strategic framework for economic development in our region for the next five years, when the region will go through another regional visioning process to create a revised five year strategy. Each year for the next five years, PADD will assess what has been done to implement the plan and adjust the strategy for the remaining years accordingly. As economic conditions change and investments are made, the strategy will be modified to accommodate those changes and keep our region moving on the trajectory established by the initial process. The CEDS will be distributed to communities around the region and will be made available through PADD's website.



# Organizational Structure

The structure of this plan is essentially understood in five parts:

- Panhandle Snapshot
- Problems and Opportunities
- Framework for Progress
- Strategy for Implementation
- Disaster and Economic Recovery and Resiliency

## **Panhandle Snapshot**

This section provides the information traditionally expected from a planning document with an analysis of economy, population, geography, workforce, transportation, infrastructure, and environment. A broad inventory of general trends, statistics, and assets is provided. It has been identified that the community would benefit from a comprehensive asset mapping initiative, but this would be better completed with its own initiative, framework, and group of committed individuals.

## **Problems and Opportunities**

Problems and opportunities are really one in the same. The problems, or gaps, that the Panhandle faces shape the opportunities for growth. This section seeks to summarize past, current, and future investments in the region and outline the role they play in economic development. In an effort to build on the current strengths of the area, an industry cluster analysis is also provided to help guide future industry investments. Consistency with other resources and plans in the region and state is also important to this strategy's success and those resources have been referenced and built upon.

## **Framework for Progress**

Creating a 'road-map' for where the region wants to be must include clearly defined goals and objectives. From a list of goals that outline the primary expectations for the region, we can outline the more specific and measureable objectives to meeting those goals in the next five years. This section has been developed by bringing the research and data together with the public input. Included in this section is an outline of regional projects, programs, and activities that will be vital to bringing about the revised vision for the region.

## **Strategy for Implementation**

### *Priority Strategies*

With many goals and strategies outlined, it is important to know where to begin. Prioritization of strategies most critical to the region and necessary as first steps helps to set the strategy in motion on a trajectory for success.

### *Performance Measures*

Assessing the region's yearly progress begins with having identified performance measures. These measures will be assessed in the annual CEDS report.





Also included in this document is an overview of the framework in place for disaster and economic recovery and resiliency.

#### **Disaster and Economic Recovery and Resiliency**

Even localized disasters have a regional impact and are best addressed when a regional support plan for recovery and risk mitigation is in place. This section relies heavily on the Local Emergency Operations Plans (LEOPs) required by the state of Nebraska to be developed and adopted in each county. PADD's role in preparedness and recovery will be outlined along with other agencies and partnerships to ensure the Panhandle is prepared and resilient in the event of a disaster.

# Goals and Objectives

## Goals

These goals are the broad and primary regional expectations. Objectives are more specific, are clearly measurable, and are the means by which the region can achieve its goals.

- 1) **Increase regional economic competitiveness by leveraging the five target industries for a more diverse economy of sustainable businesses with quality jobs.**
- 2) **Grow and sustain a culture for small business, innovation, and entrepreneur development to fill gaps and reach new frontiers.**
- 3) **Develop and utilize infrastructure that efficiently enhances other human, social, and financial resources in the region to their maximum potential.**
- 4) **Build a society of well-educated citizens and adequately prepared workforce to fill the needs of changing job opportunities and high skill business needs.**
- 5) **Maintain desirable and affordable housing options.**
- 6) **Provide efficient and effective services to Panhandle residents.**

## Increasing regional competitiveness

**Increase regional economic competitiveness by leveraging the five target industries for a more diverse economy of sustainable businesses with quality jobs.**

### Objectives

- Create an asset map for each industry, outlining the capabilities, needs, and connections of businesses in the cluster.
- Increase capacity among entities to maximize effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies.
- Prepare policy, human groups, and infrastructure to be poised for action for **energy** opportunities.
- Pursue **agricultural** innovation opportunities through emphasis and investment in research and discovery, integration of technology, and connection of regional students to private employers.
- Strengthen the **Biotechnical/bio-medical** industry in the region through strengthening partnerships, aggressive marketing, outstanding facilities, and legislation that streamlines regulatory burdens.
- Expand **Transportation and Logistics** businesses by seeking out opportunities for niche services and linking transportation and logistics businesses with other thriving industries in the Panhandle and surrounding region's industries in the Front Range and South Dakota.
- Strive to build depth in **Advanced Manufacturing** and work with leading businesses to seek out the best market gaps and opportunities on a global scale.
- Expand global and national scope of target industries and businesses within target clusters.



- Create an online hub of information for industries and economic developers
- Coordinate with economic developers to create a regional map of available sites and shovel ready sites with other certification.

### **Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

**Grow and sustain a culture for small business, innovation, and entrepreneur growth and development to fill gaps and reach new frontiers.**

#### Objectives

- Create and provide a 'package' of local and regional resources and contacts for new businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Increase accessibility to sources of capital in the region for small businesses and entrepreneurs including gap financing and seed money.
- Grow social entrepreneurship for sustainable social services in the region.
- Increase opportunities and networks for entrepreneurship education through traditional and non-traditional education settings.
- Promote social events that spur relationships and conversation between innovators, business owners, and decision makers.

### **Infrastructure and Transportation**

**Develop and utilize infrastructure that efficiently enhances other human, social, and financial resources in the region to their maximum potential.**

#### Objectives

- Develop a multi-jurisdictional brownfield mitigation project.
- Encourage local jurisdictions to maintain an inventory of properties and buildings that are vacant/abandoned and in need of rehabilitation.
- Promote and support programs that aid in the repurposing and rehabilitation of existing buildings, particularly in a historic districts.
- Promote and support road transportation projects that increase safety, efficiency, and economic development.
- Create networks of alternative transportation in each of the four 'hub' communities.
- Enhance the rail transportation network through increased efficiency and full occupancy of rail spurs.
- Maintain a high quality system of signage throughout the Panhandle that promotes identity and ease of navigation.
- Maintain vibrant main streets in all towns.
- Preserve and promote an outstanding network of public lands for outdoor, cultural, and historical use.
- Maintain soil health, water management, and land management programs that enable sustainable and prosperous agricultural activities.
- Manage community waste products to reduce environmental burden on future generations.

## Human Capital: Workforce and Education

**Build a society of well-educated citizens and adequately prepared workforce to fill the needs of changing job opportunities and high skill business needs.**

### Objectives

- Create a move-in ready workforce for targeted industries with higher skilled positions.
- Annually graduate high ratios of high school seniors who are ready for the next stages of their career and life pursuits.
- Grow roots of youth and young adults in the region through community nurturing and partnerships.
- Grow the numbers of people trained in vocational skills.
- Grow accessibility of early childhood education in the first five years of a child's life.
- Create pipeline connecting talent and skilled persons in and outside of the region to job opportunities in a manner that has clarity, depth, and breadth.
- Synchronize the regional job opportunities with skill training opportunities provided.
- Invest in and promote programs that encourage employment in information and technology fields with opportunity for upward mobility.
- Strengthen frameworks for collaboration among all regional educational institutions and leading regional industries.

## Housing

**Maintain desirable and affordable housing options**

### Objectives

- Develop a housing rehabilitation program that can be duplicated in several Panhandle jurisdictions.
- Attract green and sustainable housing construction contractors to work on housing rehabilitation.
- Increase quality of homes in \$100,000-140,000 price range to accommodate families wishing to 'move-up' in their home.
- Maintain quality properties and encourage a code of standards enforcement for owner occupied and rental units in each community.
- Develop private-public partnerships to create and maintain community housing policies to be less dependent on non-profits and development districts.

## Service Efficiency

**Provide efficient and high quality government and social services.**

### Objectives

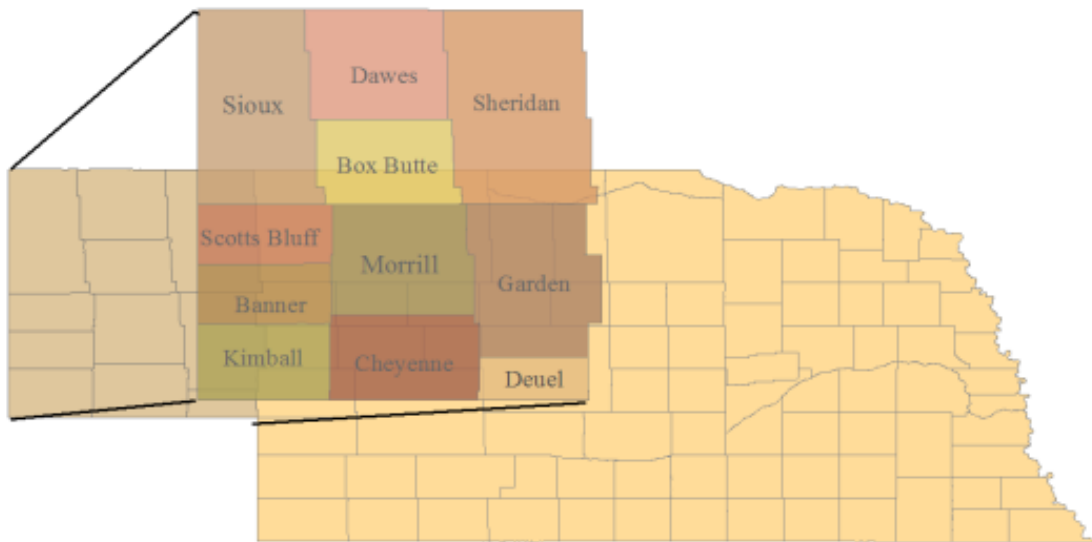
- Through PADD, student work, and local technology consultants, ensure that every community has an easily navigable, updated, and highly resourceful website.
- Establish a 'one-stop shop' website with shared inter-jurisdictional information and valuable statistics.
- Establish a means for digital and in person inter-jurisdictional communication



- Maintain a coalition of creative partnerships to address common problems throughout the Panhandle.
- Asset map governmental and social services on a regional basis and develop objective, product driven criteria to assess the adequacy of service.
- Promote educational network for social entrepreneurship to sustain social services in the region.

# Panhandle Snapshot

- Basics
- Population
- Geography, Climate, Resources and Environment
- Economy, Employment, and Workforce
- Transportation/Infrastructure
- Organizations in the field



## Basics

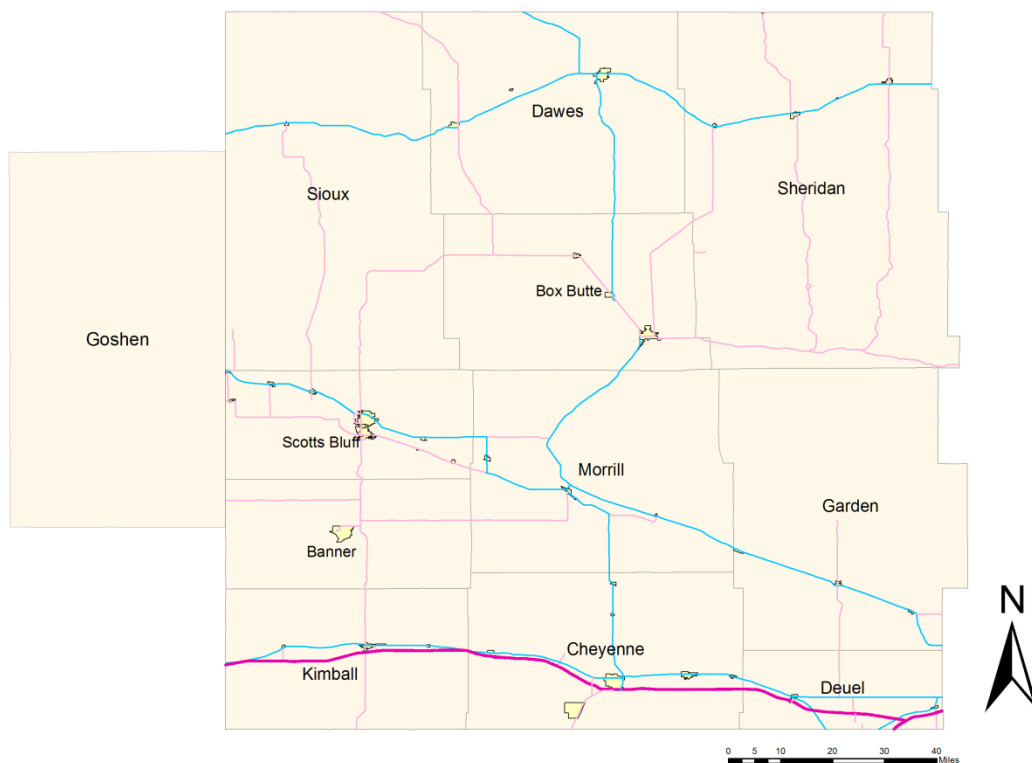
### Overview

The Nebraska Panhandle is a rural region on the rural high plains, surrounded by neighbors of Wyoming to the west, Colorado to the south, and South Dakota to the north. Its agricultural backbone perhaps has insulated it from the most recent economic downturn but has likely also contributed to out-migration as fewer opportunities have been available compared to larger cities for young adults with diverse professional trades. Population consolidation continues, wages remain lower than the state and nation averages, and the median age continues to increase as the baby boomers age, birth rate stabilizes, and out-migration of youth continues. The unique bluffs, escarpments, and open space are some of the most treasured assets in the region and lend the region to tourism and historic attractions.

### PADD Region

This plan will cover the 11 counties of the Nebraska panhandle. This area coincides with the service district for PADD. However, it must also be noted that the Panhandle economic area as defined by the US Cluster Mapping Project includes Goshen County, Wyoming to the west and omits Dawes County in the northern Panhandle. For this reason, Goshen County will be included in many of the analyses and the Rapid City area goals and assets will be considered for Dawes County as well.

Figure 1: Region Map





### Quick Facts for 11 Panhandle Counties:

Population (2010)	87,789
Population change (2000-2010)	-2.9%
Incorporated municipalities	35
Unemployment Rate (June 2012-July 2013)	4.1%
% Bachelor Degree or higher	22.0%

## Population

While the population of Nebraska has been slowly but steadily increasing over the past 60 years, the Panhandle's population peaked in the 1960s. Much of Nebraska's growth can be attributed to the metropolitan areas.

Figure 2: Nebraska Population 1930-2010

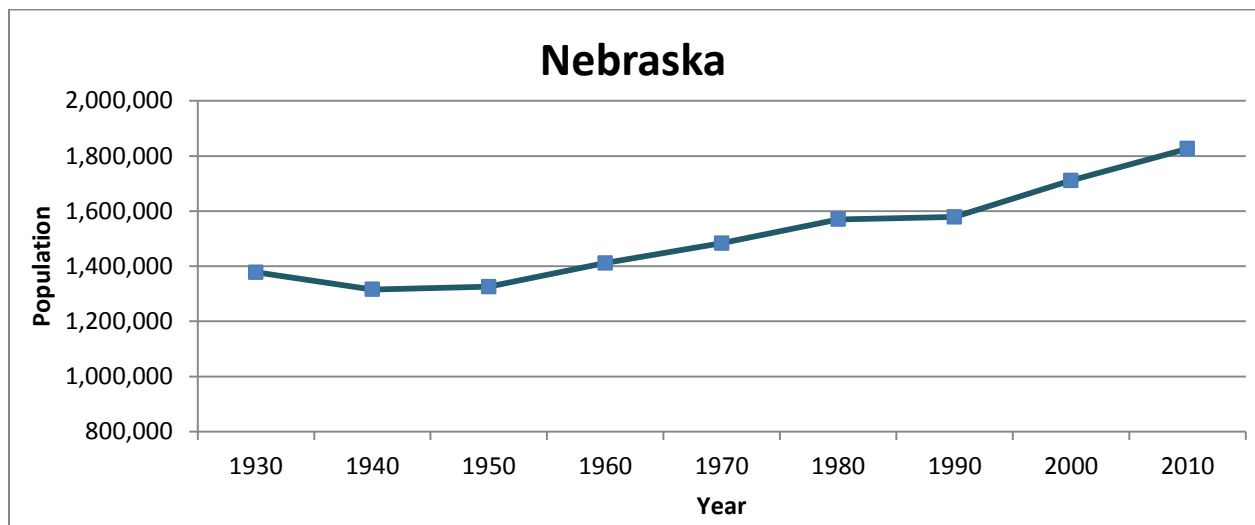


Figure 3: Panhandle Population 1930-2010

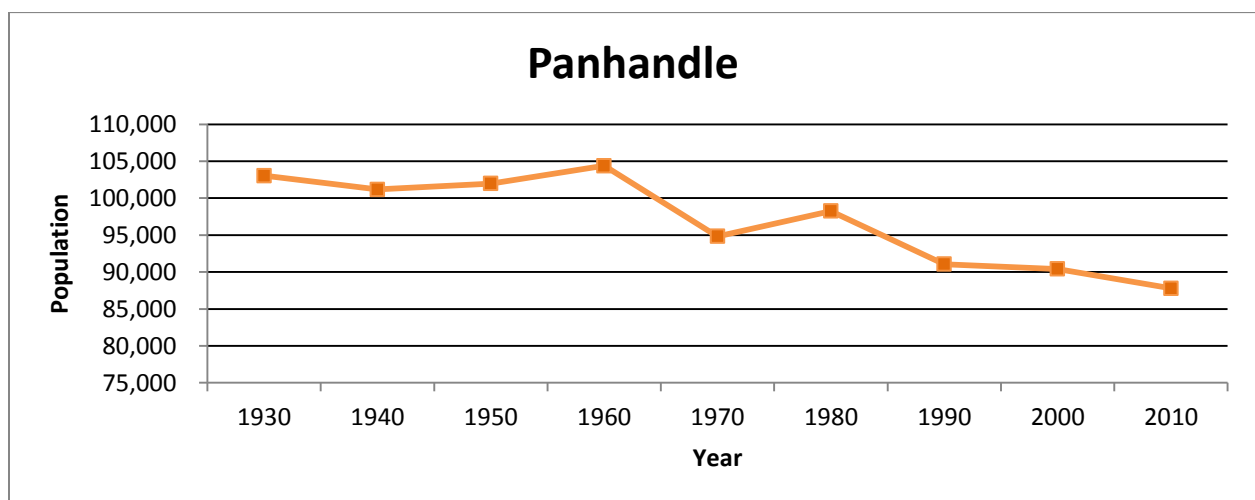




Figure 4: Metro county share of Nebraska Population

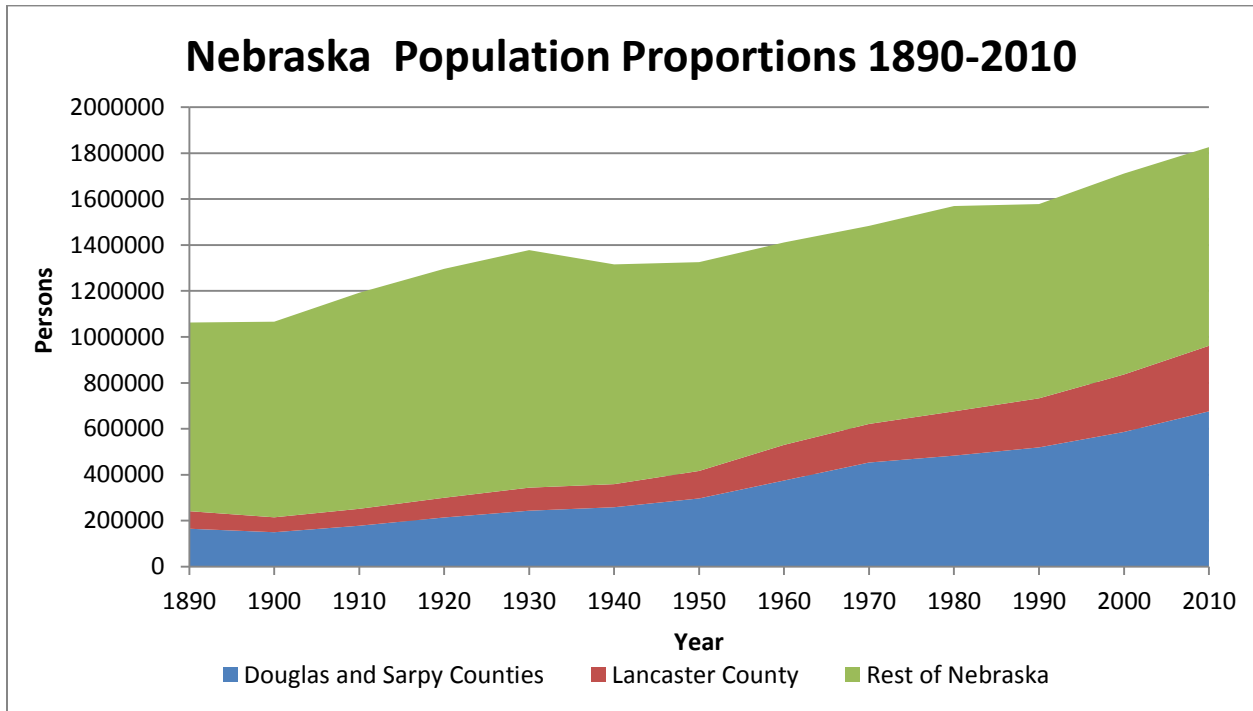


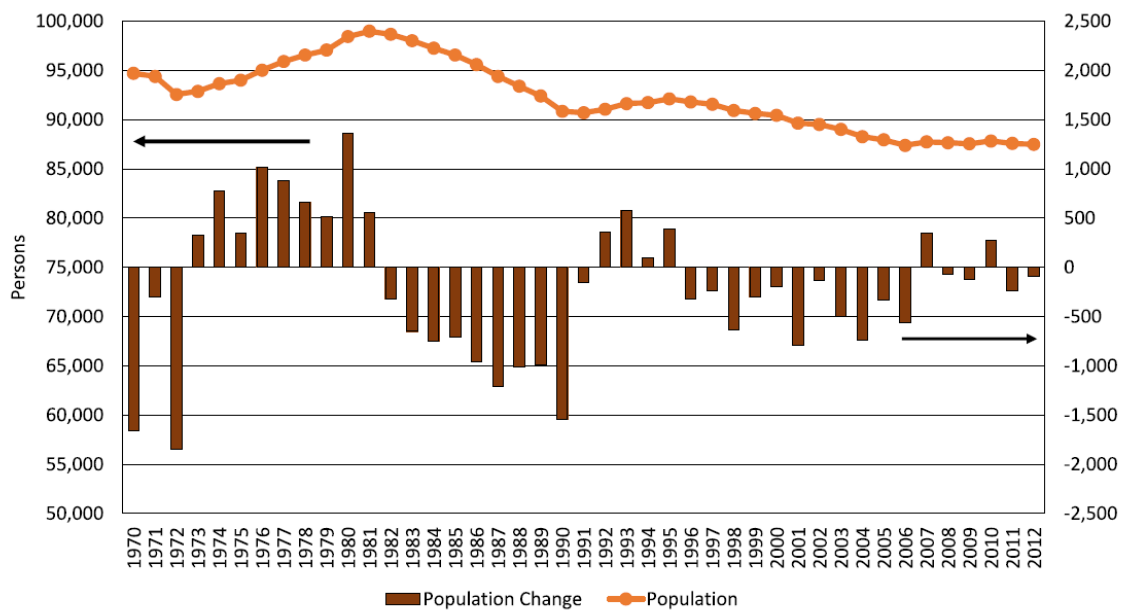
Figure 4 shows how Nebraska's population growth has been concentrated almost entirely in the metropolitan counties of Douglas, Sarpy, and Lancaster in the eastern part of the state. These counties are home to the Omaha metropolitan area and the state capital metropolitan area of Lincoln.

#### What does a declining population mean for our region?

- Decreased political influence in the state
- Impacted share of resources
- Threat of decreased vitality
- Need to reassess infrastructure needs vs. capacity

Figure 5: Population and population change for 11 Panhandle counties 1970-2012

## Population and Population Change for 11 Panhandle Counties, 1970 to 2012



Source: Annual Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

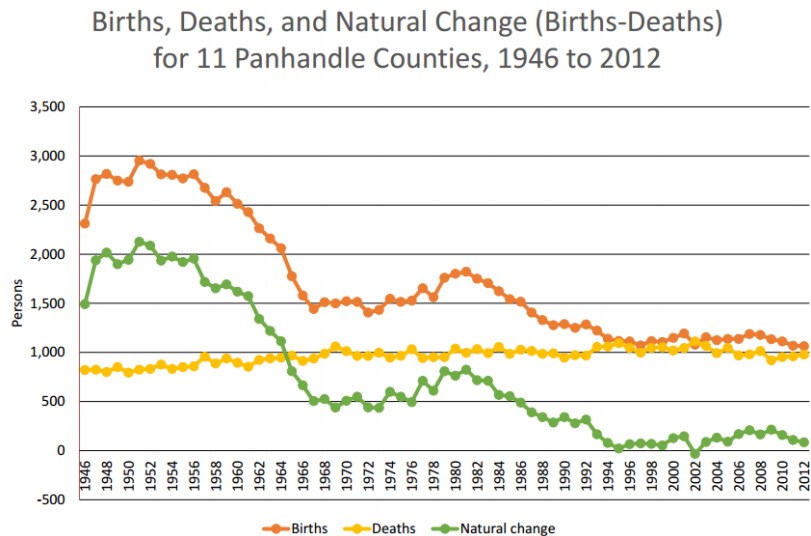
Graph compiled and prepared by University of Nebraska at Omaha Center for Public Affairs Research

After a period of growth in the 1970s, the 11 panhandle counties experienced dramatic population loss in the 1980s, coinciding with the Farm Crisis before mildly rebounding in the early 1990s. After another period of population decline from the mid-90s to the mid-2000s, population has generally stabilized.



The graph in figure 6 shows that natural change has leveled out around zero and may turn negative in coming years as the baby boomers age. Because of years of youth outmigration and a decrease in family size, births are lower and population gains will likely depend on in migration. The region also has had around 15,000 children under the age of 18 for several years and so the prospect of young adult population would also rely on in-migration.

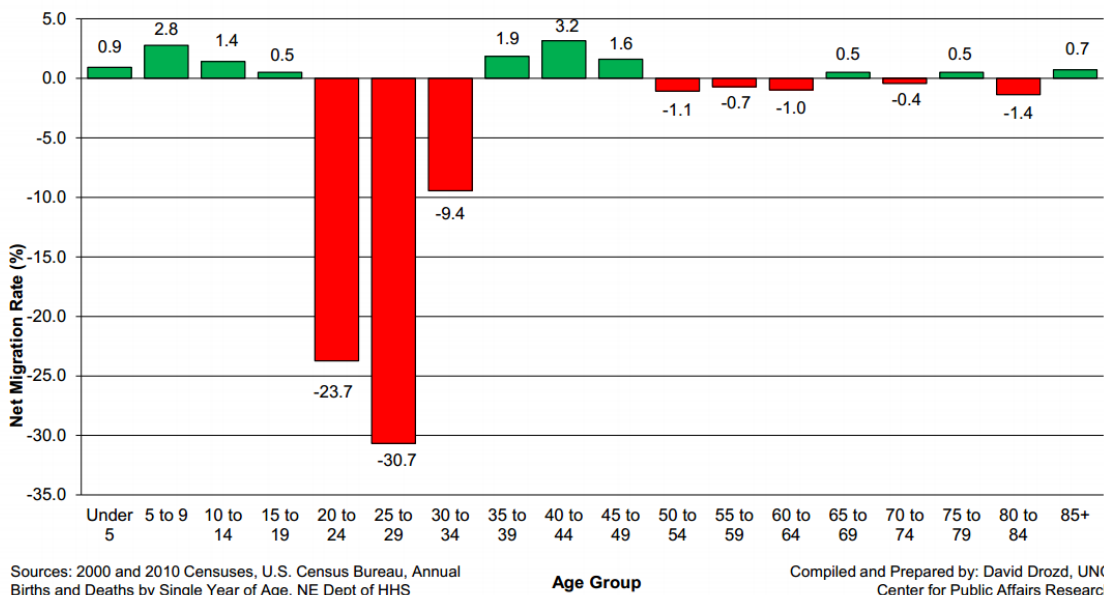
Figure 6: Historic natural change



Source: Vital Statistics Reports, Nebraska  
Department of Health and Human Services

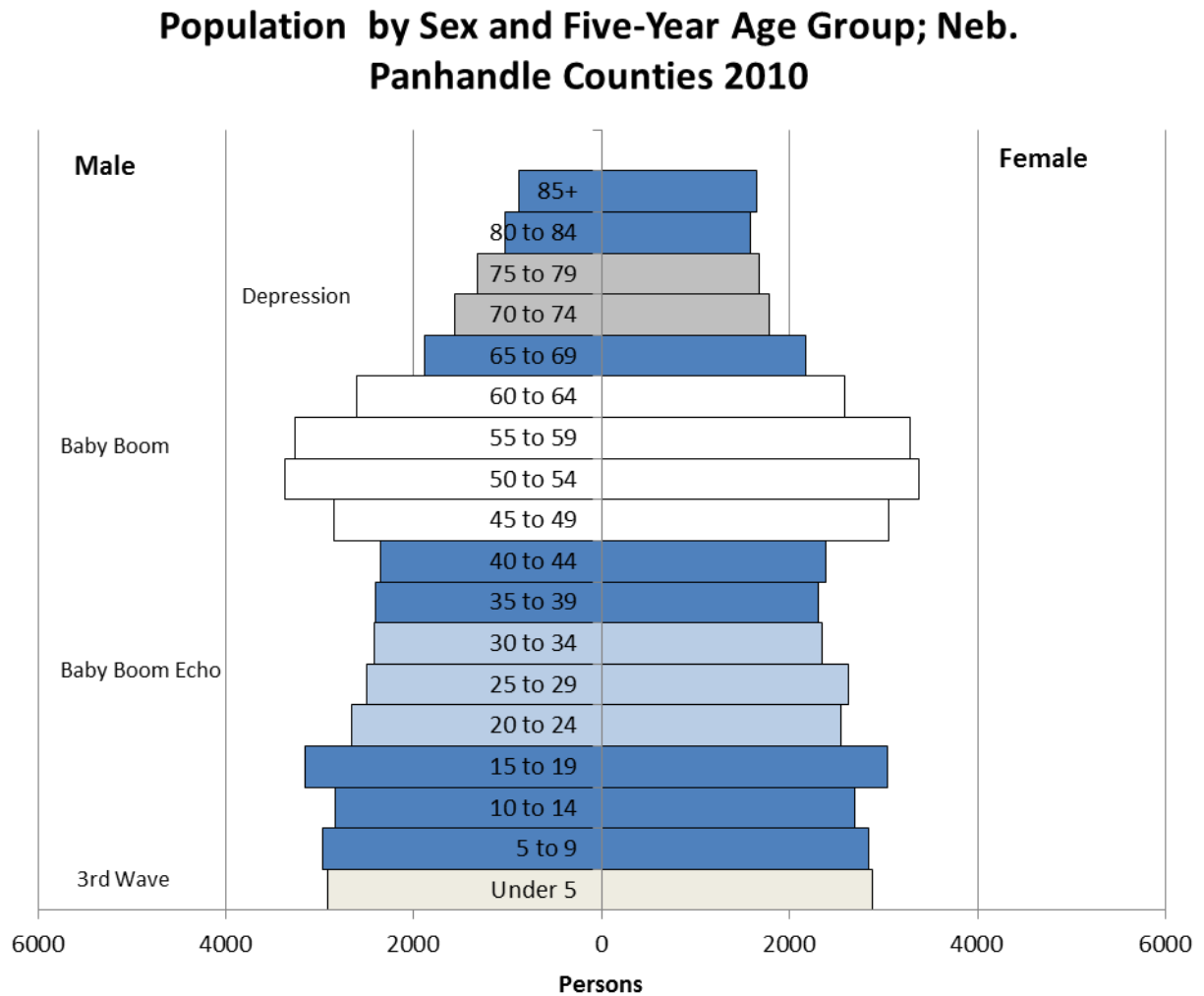
Graph compiled and prepared by University of Nebraska at Omaha  
Center for Public Affairs Research

Net Migration Rate by Age for 11 Nebraska Panhandle Counties,  
2000-2010 (Overall Net Migration Rate = - 4.4%)



Migration patterns show the expected out-migration for young adults as the economic, education, and social opportunities of metropolitan and other areas draw them away. Some move back in their middle age to raise a family in near where they grew up. Population centers of the Panhandle, such as Chadron, Alliance, and Scottsbluff also have higher in migration in older generations over 65, but this is usually from more rural areas within the Panhandle.

Figure 7: 2010 Population Pyramid



Source: US Census 2010

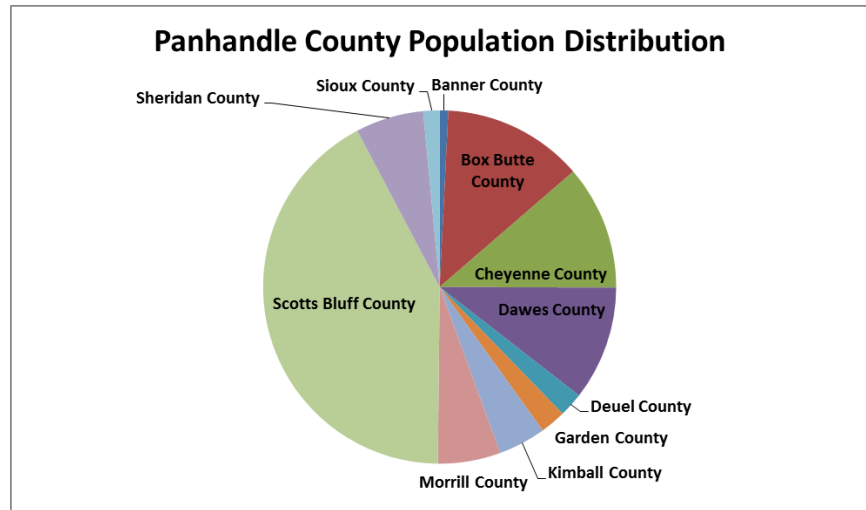
The population pyramid from 2010 shows the general age make-up of the Nebraska Panhandle with a still strongly pronounced baby boom generation but a thinning of the pyramid where the baby boom “echo” should be. The shape of this pyramid shows issues both in opportunities for young adults and taking care of an aging population. Decreased family sizes also affect the straight ‘trunk’ rather than the wide base.

Table 1: County Population 2000-2010

	Banner County	Box Butte County	Cheyenne County	Dawes County	Deuel County	Garden County	Kimball County	Morrill County	Scotts Bluff County	Sheridan County	Sioux County	Panhandle	% Change 2000-2010
2000	819	12,158	9,830	9,060	2,098	2,292	4,089	5,440	36,951	6,198	1,475	90410	
2010	690	11,308	9,998	9,182	1,941	2,057	3,821	5,042	36,970	5,469	1,311	87789	
Net Change	-129	-850	168	122	-157	-235	-268	-398	19	-729	-164	-2621	-2.9

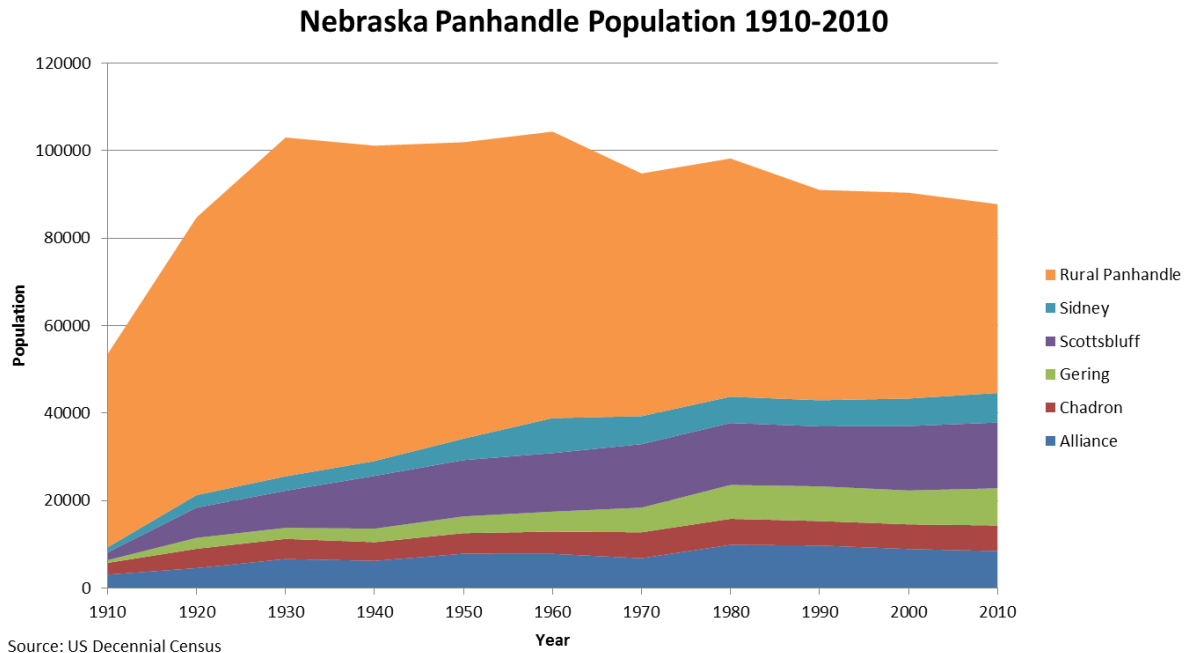
As table one states and figure 8 emphasizes, 77% of the panhandle's population is concentrated in the 4 'trade counties' of Scotts Bluff, Box Butte, Cheyenne, and Dawes. These counties are home to the cities that serve as economic and retail hubs for the different parts of the Panhandle. Scottsbluff is a hub in Scotts Bluff county for the west central panhandle and eastern Wyoming, Sidney is a job and economic hub for the southern Panhandle, Alliance serves as the economic engine for the central Panhandle, and Chadron is a hub for the northern part of the Nebraska Panhandle as some of extreme Southwest Wyoming, including the Pine Ridge American Indian Reservation.

Figure 8: Population Distribution



Another key trend in the region, which mirrors the statewide and nationwide trend, is population consolidation. While this is not a new phenomenon, the service and innovation based economy and decrease of farm employment practically ensures this pattern will continue into the future. The 4 economic hubs of the region account for nearly half of the Nebraska Panhandle population.

Figure 9: Panhandle population consolidation

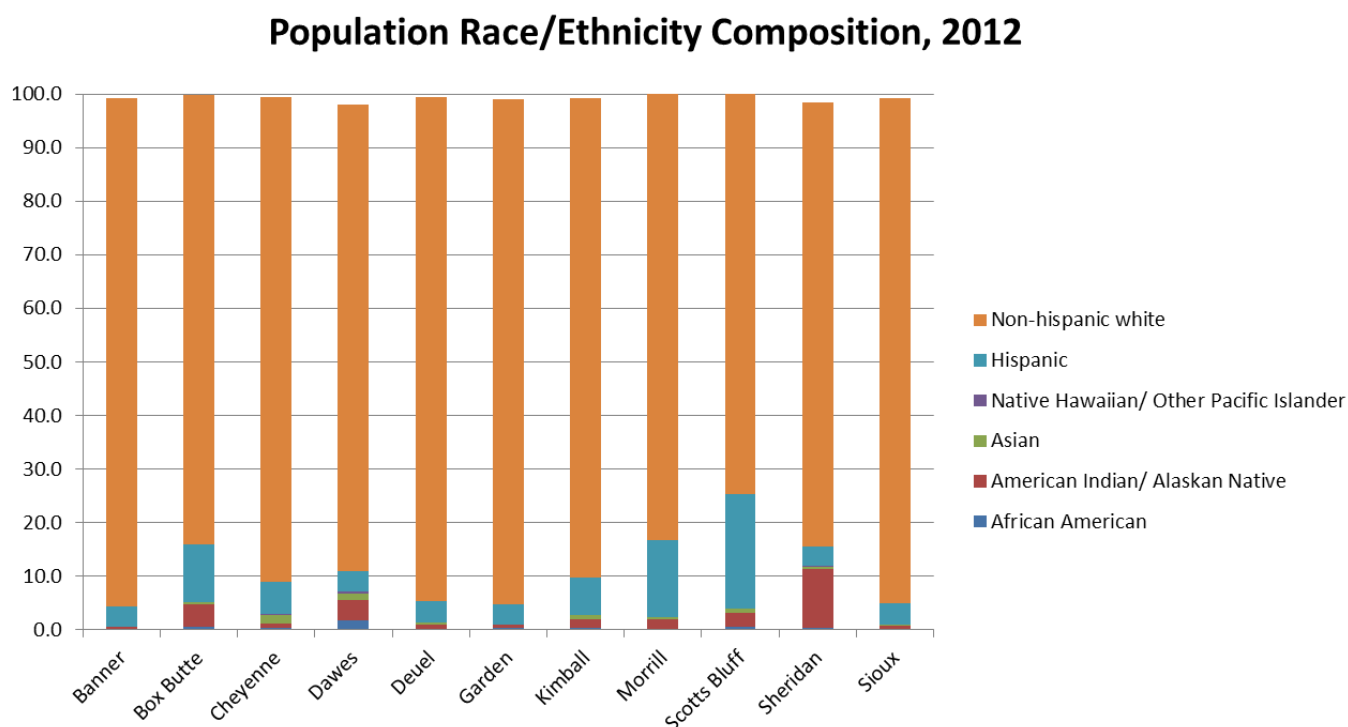


## Race

Race patterns in a population are important to assess because they reveal social patterns. Social issues tend to follow the lines of certain social groups and families, and families have tended to follow race line. With this understanding we can see social and economic patterns for certain segments of the population.

In the Nebraska, the majority races is overwhelmingly white but some communities have Hispanic persons making up 15 to 30 percent of their population and some also have larger American Indian populations than other parts of the country.

Figure 10: Race Composition in the 11 Panhandle Counties



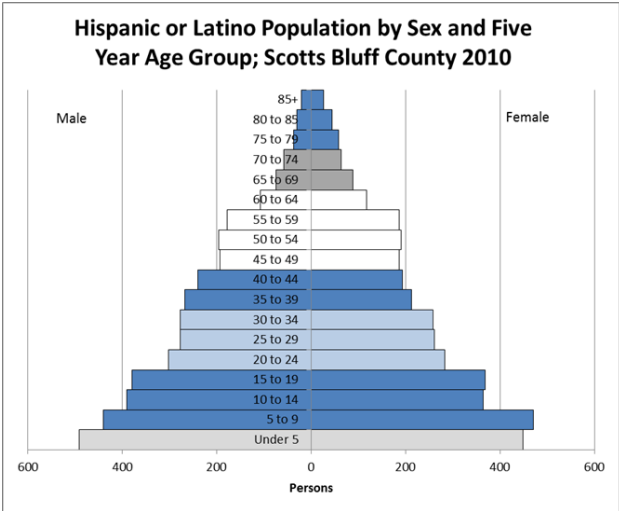
Scotts Bluff and Morrill counties show higher Hispanic populations while Sheridan County shows over a 10% American Indian population. However as table 2 shows, the English proficiency is very high, even in counties with larger Hispanic populations, differing from the statistics of other highly Hispanic communities in the state such as Schuyler and Lexington.

Table 2: Percent not proficient in English by County

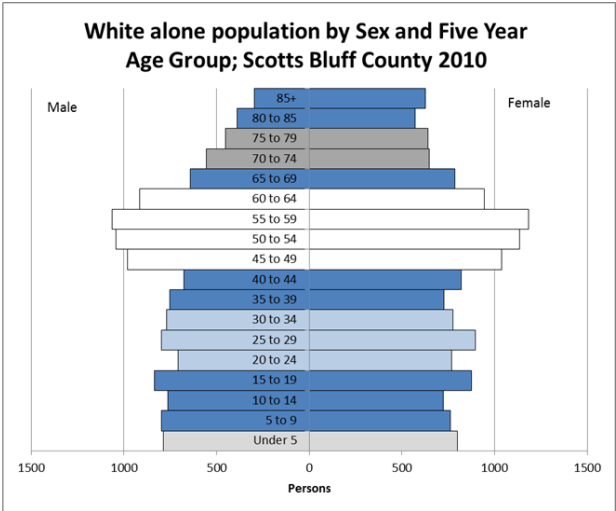
	Banner	Box Butte	Cheyenne	Dawes	Deuel	Garden	Kimball	Morrill	Scotts Bluff	Sheridan	Sioux
% not proficient in English	0.0	0.8	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.7	1.2	1.8	0.7	0.3



Race and equity has economic implications when considering natural growth and who will be around in the region in the future. While the ratio of White to Hispanic people in Scotts Bluff County for the baby boom generation is roughly 5 to 1, the ratio of White to Hispanic children under 10 is around 3 to 2 or 6 to 5.



Average Family Size: 3.54  
Median Age: 24.5  
Bachelor Degree or Higher 2012: 3.6%  
Median HH Income 2012: 31,285



Average Family Size: 2.85  
Median Age: 44.8  
Bachelor Degree or Higher 2012: 25.5%  
Median HH Income: 46,396

We are not so interested in this statistic as a pure matter of race composition, but it does become important when looking at median incomes, poverty, and educational attainment. More children growing up in households that are lower income with lower educational attainment means more children with more barriers to upward mobility in the future. More people with fewer skills and lower pay eventually becomes a detriment to a community's economy, which is why the region must be proactive in education, skill building, and family stability (both social and financial) for all residents.



## Geography, Climate, and Environment

### Quick Facts:

Land Area	14,138 sq. miles
Population	87,789
Population Density	6.2 people/ sq. mile
Climate	Semi-arid (15.79 in of annual precip)
Yearly days with sun	227

Despite its sparse population and large distances between communities, the Nebraska Panhandle is relatively close to three neighboring states and several metropolitan areas.

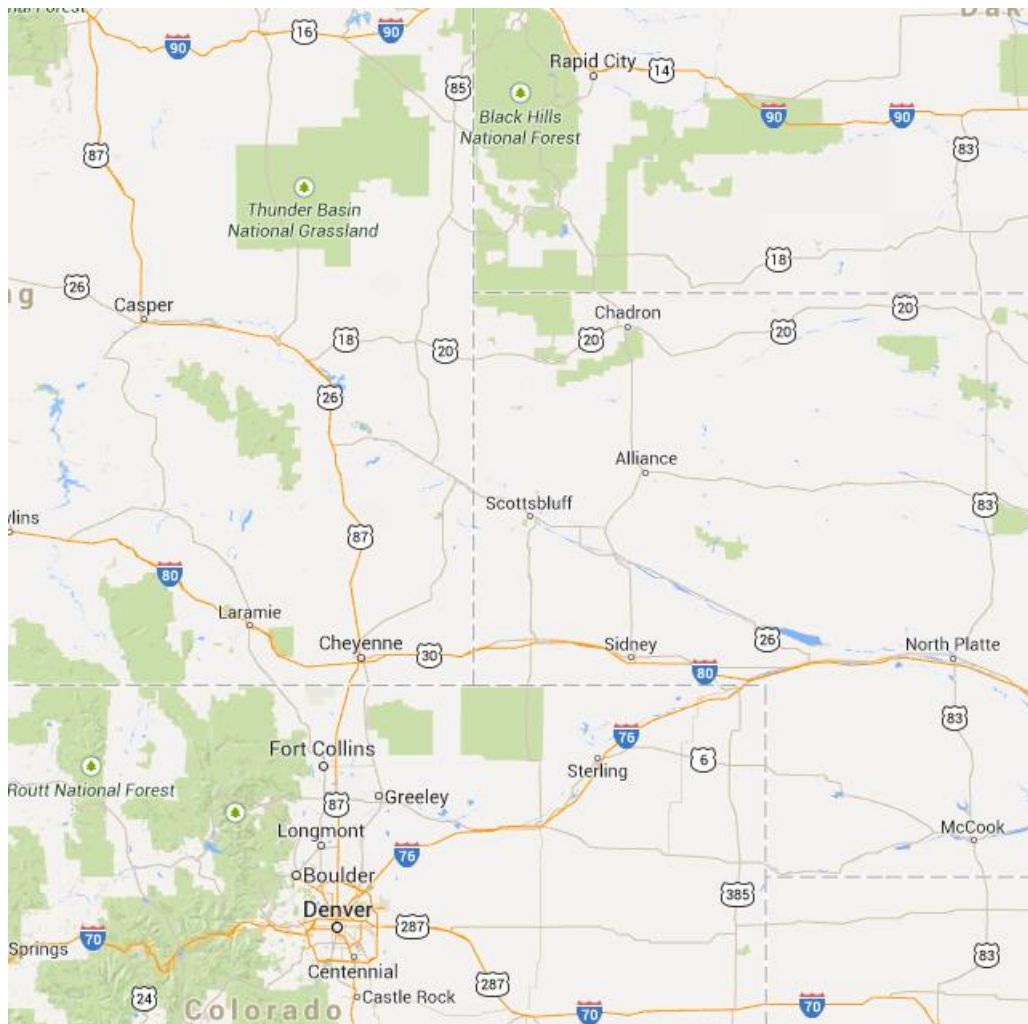




Table 3: Nearby and relevant larger cities

Nearby and Relevant Larger Cities			
Location	Population	Miles Away	Drive Time
Casper, WY	57,813	207	3h 19m
Cheyenne, WY	61,537	129	2h 5m
Denver, CO	634,265	225	3h 36m
Fort Collins, CO	148,612	173	2h 44m
Lincoln, NE	265,404	377	5h 37m
North Platte, NE	24,592	155	2h 28m
Omaha, NE	421,570	427	6h 17m
Rapid City, SD	70,812	173	1h 45m

Along with being fairly close to some of the above listed cities, the Panhandle is also close to numerous national parks, monuments, and forests including Rocky Mountain National Park, Badlands National Park, and Wind Cave National Park. The region also includes Scotts Bluff National Monument, Chimney Rock National Historic Site, and Nebraska National Forest.

One significant geographical disadvantage is being roughly 377 miles away from the state capital in Lincoln.

## Topography

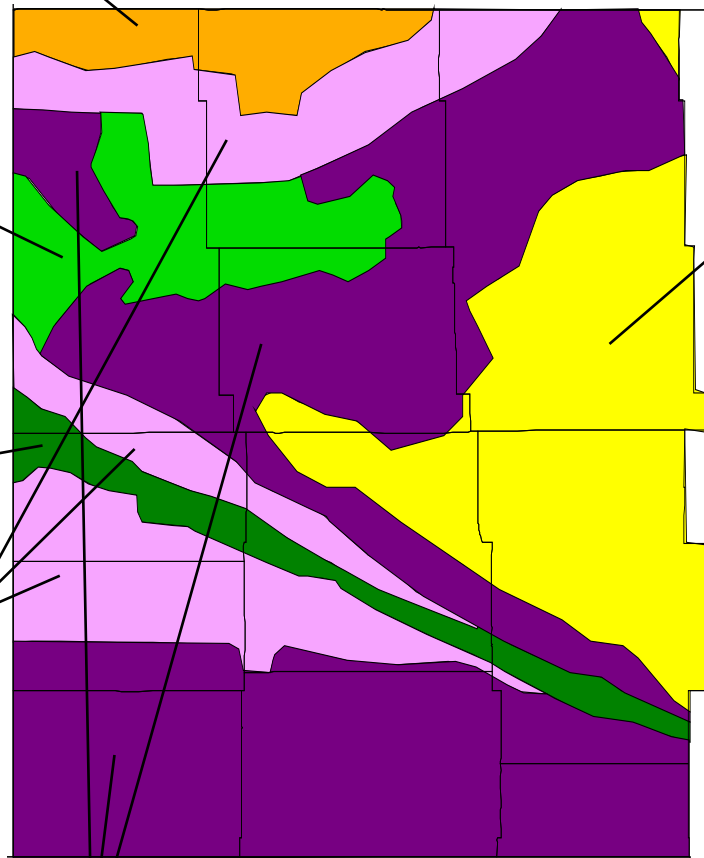
Nebraska has six distinct types of topography and all six types are located in the Nebraska Panhandle. These topographic features include the flat lying plains, the dissected plains, the rolling hills, the sand hills, valleys, and the valley side slopes.

**Rolling Hills-** Hilly land with moderate to steep slopes and rounded ridge crests. These hills were produced by the erosion of clay and clay-shale beds.

**Dissected Plains-**Hilly Land with moderate to steep slopes, sharp ridges crests, and remnants of the old, nearly level plain. The Dissected Plains are old plains eroded by water and wind.

**Valleys-** Flat-lying land along the major streams. The materials of the valleys are stream deposited silt, clay, sand, and gravel.

**Valley Side Slopes-** Moderately sloping land which occurs between the escarpments and the major stream valleys. These areas are mostly siltstone bedrock covered by a few feet to a few tens of feet of sand, gravel or silt.



**Sand Hills-** Hilly land composed of low to high sand dunes of sand stabilized by a grass cover. The sand dunes mantle stream deposited silt, sand, gravel and sandstone.

**Plains-** Flat lying land which lies above the valley. The materials of the plains are sandstone or stream-deposited silt, clay, sand, and gravel overlain by wind-



## Soils

**Bridgeport-Keith**— The Bridgeport-Keith series consists of deep well-drained soils from loess. These soils are on uplands and tablelands with slopes of 1 to 9 percent.

**Pierre-Samsil**— The Pierre-Samsil series consists of moderately deep, well-drained soils weathered from clay shale. These soils are on uplands. Slopes range from 1 to 50 percent.

**Rough Broken Land**— This soil consists of very steep to nearly vertical rock outcrops. This area has very little use for farming outside of grazing land.

**Keith-Rosebud**— This series consists of deep well-drained soils from loess and sandstone. These soils are on uplands and tablelands with slopes of 1 to 9 percent.

**Anselmo-Keith**— This series consists of deep, well-drained soils from loess. These soils are on uplands and tablelands with slopes of 1 to 20 percent.

**Valentine-Dunday**— This series consists of deep, no limy, excessively drained soils that were deposited by wind with slopes of 3 to 17 percent

**Mitchell-Tripp**— This series consists of deep, well-drained, immature soils that formed from the deposits of sandstone with slopes ranging from nearly level to very steep.

**McCook-Las**— This series consists of nearly level, well drained soils on bottom lands which formed from river alluvium.

**Keith-Colby**— This series consists of deep well-drained soils from loess and sandstone. These soils are on uplands and tablelands with slopes of 1 to 9 percent.





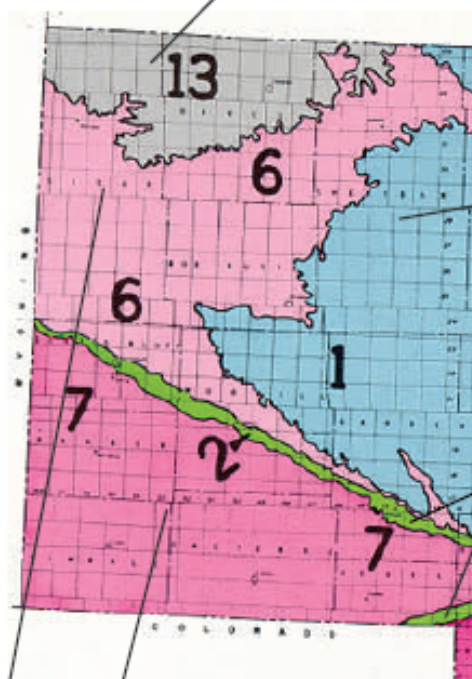
## Groundwater Resources

The Panhandle lies in the High Plains Section of the Great Plains Physiographic Province. The Region's groundwater resources can be categorized into five distinct areas:

Groundwater resources have become one of the state's greatest concerns in the past decade. A persistent drought and significant irrigation use has greatly diminished this valuable resource. As a result, there has been recent restriction to new groundwater wells. Despite these reductions, there continues to be a conflict between, ag, city, industrial and recreational users.

Water contamination is a growing concern in the Panhandle. High levels of nitrates, arsenic, and uranium are causing problems for the public drinking water systems. Stricter federal regulations on arsenic could pose another potential problem in complying with water standards

**13. Hat Creek-White River Drainage Basin:** Fine-grained deposits of Tertiary and Cretaceous age occur at the surface and underlie the region making it difficult to obtain groundwater in these areas. Small yields are obtained from deposits underlying the river valleys and from sand lenses or fracture zones where the Brule Formation is saturated.



**1. Sand Hills Area:** Large yields of good quality water can be obtained from aquifers of Tertiary & Quaternary age. Runoff rarely occurs because precipitation infiltrates the sandy soils. Most groundwater is lost due to evapotranspiration from lakes between the dunes and from subirrigated meadows or discharge by seepage into streams that are known for their uniform flow.

**2. Platte River Valley:** High yields of good quality water can be obtained from sand and gravel of the Quaternary age in most parts of the Valley. The Ogallala Group underlies the alluvium in parts of the North & South Platte River valleys and is also a source of water supply. Surface water is diverted from the Platte River and its major tributaries for irrigation purposes. Water quality is affected to a degree by dissolved minerals and fertilizers carried from soils by infiltration and irrigation.

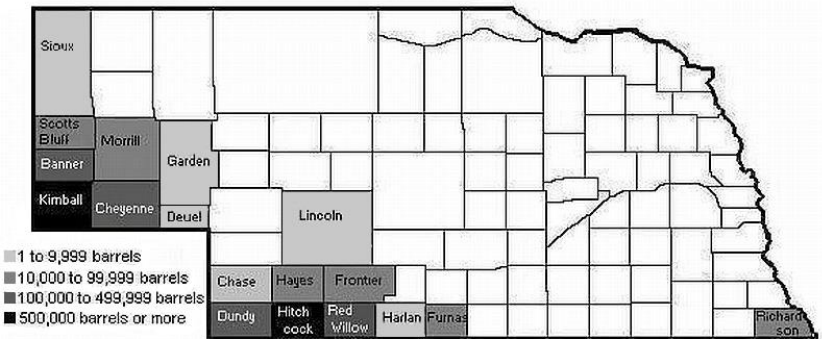
**6. And 7. Northern & Southern Tablelands:** Although thick sequences of moderately permeable sediments of Tertiary age underlie the tablelands, wells are usually several hundred feet deep. Wells of large capacity are restricted generally to areas underlain by the Ogallala and Arikaree Groups.



## Oil Resources

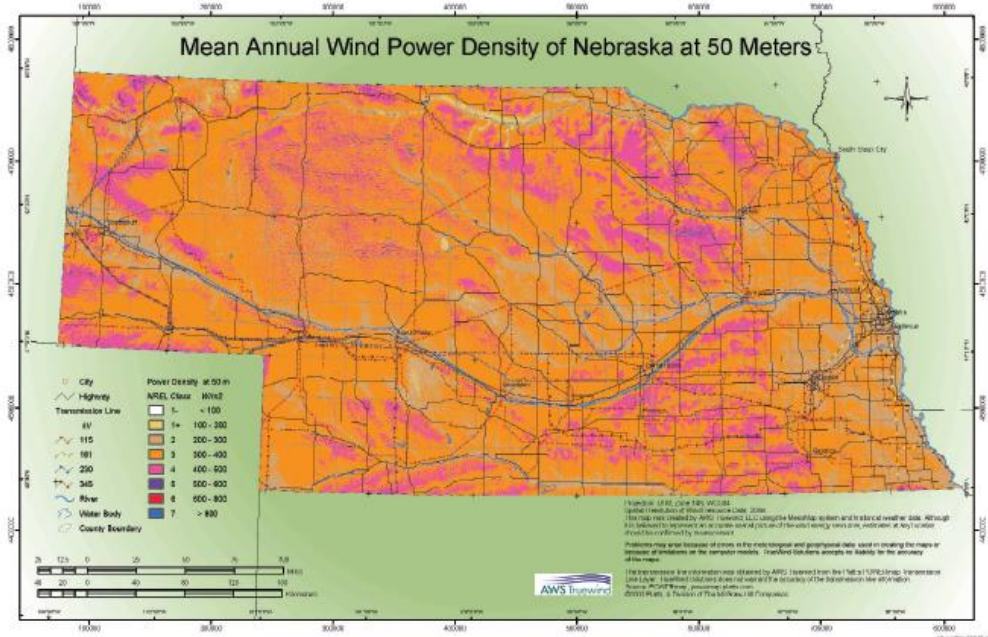
Kimball County has historically accounted for 30% of the oil production in the state of Nebraska. However, the volume of oil produced from the southern Panhandle has been decreasing, and production in Kimball County was about 150,000 BBL lower in 2012 as it was in 2006. Despite this trend, talk has surfaced of the Niobrara Play becoming a viable and targeted area for more development in the future, although the resources tend to taper off shortly upon crossing the border from Colorado into Nebraska.

Figure 11: Nebraska oil production



## Wind Resources

The state of Nebraska ranks fourth in the nation with 917,999 megawatts of wind generation potential. Many of the state's best wind resources are in the Nebraska Panhandle and couple of the nation's largest wind farms lie just across the state border in Colorado. Despite our great potential for wind energy production, Nebraska only has about 534 megawatts of installed capacity or enough to power about 160,000 homes (US Dept of Energy). This figure ranks 23rd when it comes to state wind energy production. The only Panhandle wind production is a small farm of turbines northwest of Kimball. Banner County in particular has great potential in pursuing wind energy and has formed a coalition to assess and promote this potential in the county.



## Uranium

Nebraska's only uranium mine is located in Dawes County. The mine is operated by Cameco and more specifically, the subsidiary Crow Butte Resources. This resource causes concern for river water pollution but has been deemed safe and responsible production by the EPA and is pending relicensing. This mine brings 58 jobs to the Crawford area and is a very significant contributor of money to local schools.



Crowe Butte Mine began recovering Uranium in 1991 and is a significant contributor to the local economy.

Photo obtained from Cameco

## Potash

Sheridan County was one of the nation's leading Potash producers nearly a century ago. Today, it is assumed the Panhandle still has potash resources in Sheridan and Garden County since production was cut off not by resource depletion but by resuming importation of potash from Europe after World War I. The feasibility of recovering this resource is unknown.

## Biomass Potential

The Pine Ridge in the northern Panhandle has tremendous potential for biomass energy through wood burning boilers in the area's buildings. Investing in steam infrastructure not only would provide the county with a local, renewable resource but would help to better manage forest fire hazards and could make forest management activities less dependent on limited grant dollars. 10,000 tons of wood are currently being utilized annually compared to the 300,000 tons that grow and could be used annually.



Picture courtesy of Nebraska Forest Service

Wood supplements in coal firing burners are also low risk alternatives to lower greenhouse gas emissions if certain standards need to be upheld to satisfy federal regulation.

Ethanol and bio-diesel are also biomass opportunities for the Panhandle, though debates continue about the efficiency and effectiveness of biofuels.







## Economy

Economic health involves leveraging current economic assets and being prepared for economic opportunities that can increase wealth and prosperity. In understanding the current economy of the Panhandle, it is important to understand the 4 trade hubs and their economies as well as the industries that are strong or strengthening in the region.

### Employment and Workforce

Employment patterns influence many of the characteristics based on wages, land use, commuting patterns, and affordability of cost of living. The Panhandle generally has a fairly low unemployment rate when compared to Nebraska and has a very low unemployment rate compared to the nation.

Table 4: Unemployment Rates

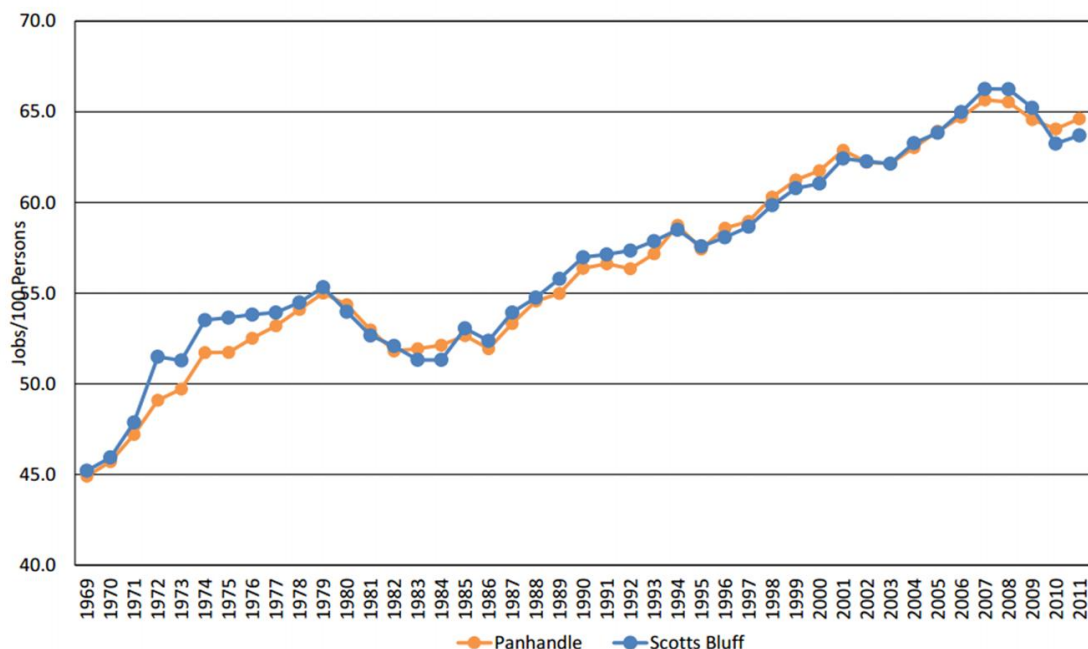
County	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate (%)
Banner County, NE	372	352	20	5.4
Box Butte County, NE	5,529	5,287	242	4.4
Cheyenne County, NE	5,124	4,972	152	3.0
Dawes County, NE	4,807	4,612	195	4.1
Deuel County, NE	1,253	1,213	40	3.2
Garden County, NE	1,146	1,108	38	3.3
Kimball County, NE	2,059	1,982	77	3.7
Morrill County, NE	2,873	2,795	78	2.7
Scotts Bluff County, NE	19,213	18,391	822	4.3
Sheridan County, NE	3,074	2,971	103	3.4
Sioux County, NE	749	721	28	3.7
Goshen County, WY	6,479	6,116	363	5.6
<b>REGION</b>	<b>52,678</b>	<b>50,520</b>	<b>2,158</b>	<b>4.1</b>
<b>Nebraska</b>				<b>3.7%</b>
<b>United States</b>				<b>6.7%</b>

Scotts Bluff, Banner, Box Butte, Dawes, and Goshen Counties all report unemployment rates higher than the state of Nebraska's average but are all still under national rate. Historically, there the number of jobs available per 100 persons has increased while wages still remain below the national and state averages. While this ratio's increase can likely be partly attributed to loss of youth in the region it also illustrates that it is important to look at the quality of jobs we attract and encourage in the region, not just the quantity of jobs. Families with moms and dads who work multiple jobs are typically less stable since the parents are not able to be home as much.



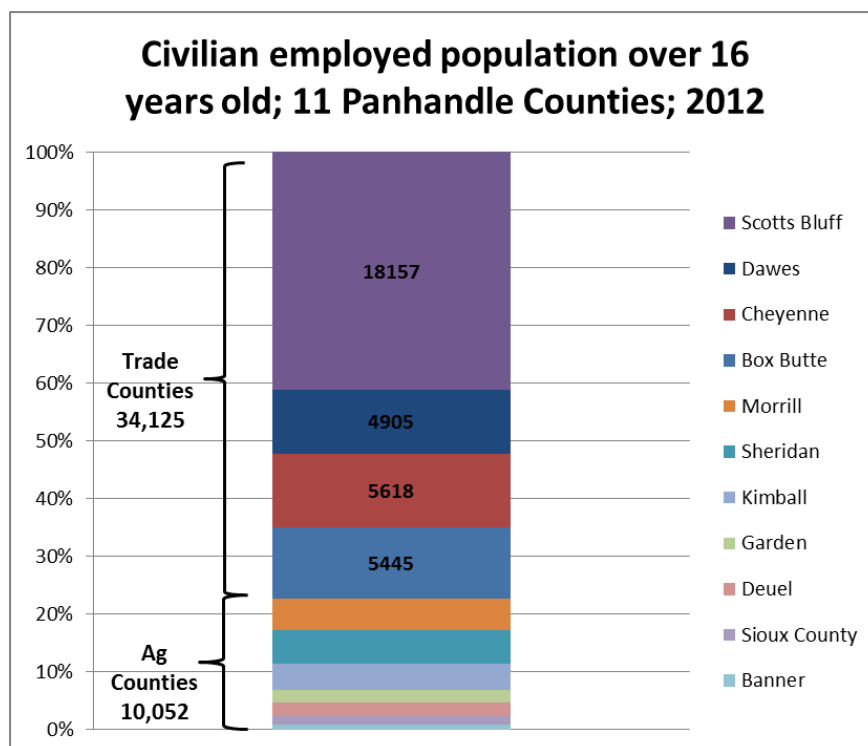
Figure 13: Jobs per 100 persons 1969-2011

### Jobs per 100 Persons for 11 Panhandle Counties and Scotts Bluff County, 1969 to 2011



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Economic Information System, released November 26, 2012

Figure 12: Employed population by county; 2012





The Panhandle occupation composition shows the majority of employed workers having occupations in service and office occupations. Manual labor occupations in natural resources, construction, and maintenance make up about 13% of the population with production and transportation making up 14% of occupations.

The industry composition in the panhandle shows nearly 1 in 4 employed residents working in education, health care, and social assistance as retail, transportation, and agriculture make up the next largest industries.

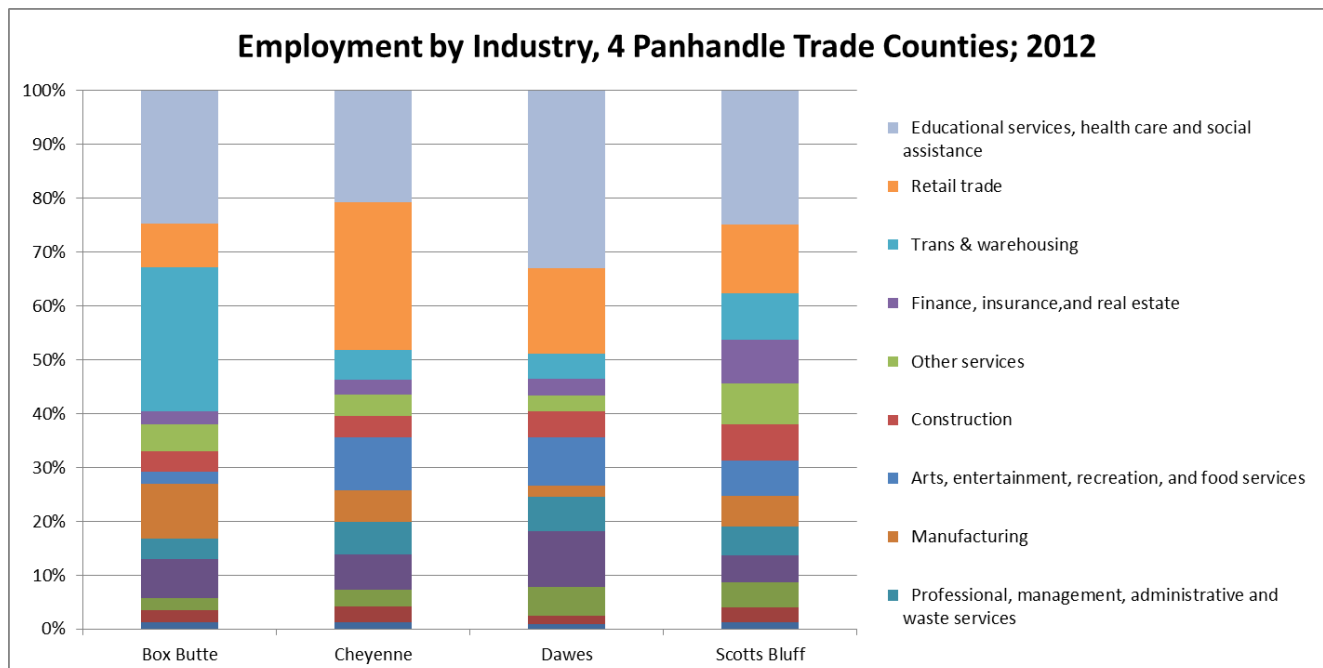
**Table 5: 2012 Occupation Composition**

OCCUPATION	2012 Totals	
	Estimate	Percent
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	44177	
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	13504	30.6%
Service occupations	7725	17.5%
Sales and office occupations	11005	24.9%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	5716	12.9%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	6227	14.1%

**Table 6: 2012 Industry Composition**

INDUSTRY	2012 Totals	
	Estimate	Percent
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	44177	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	4019	9.1%
Construction	2527	5.7%
Manufacturing	2495	5.6%
Wholesale trade	1229	2.8%
Retail trade	6441	14.6%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	4202	9.5%
Information	459	1.0%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	2356	5.3%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and Educational services, and health care and social assistance	10911	24.7%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	2784	6.3%
Other services, except public administration	2534	5.7%
Public administration	1940	4.4%

**Figure 14: Employment ratio by industry, Panhandle Trade Counties 2012**

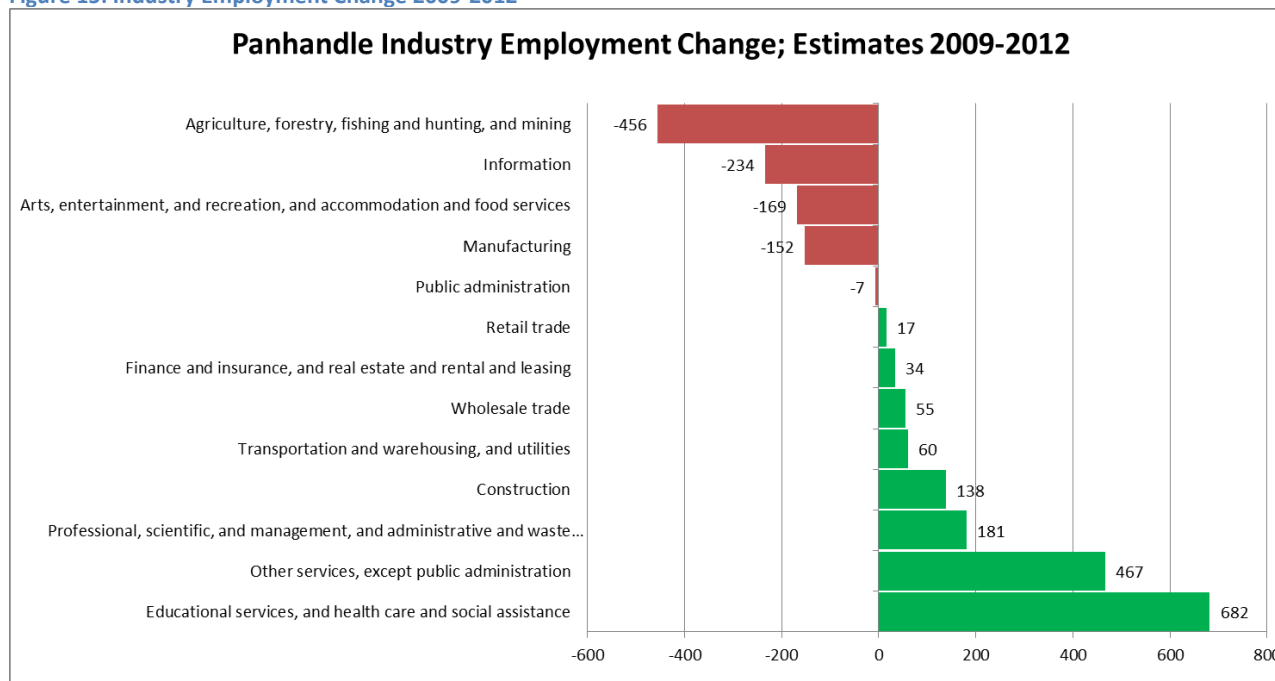


## Change in Industry Employment

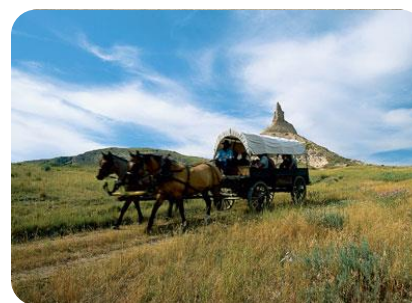
Despite being one of the area's top economic strengths, agriculture and other natural resource industries lost the most in employment from 2009 to 2012 with almost 500 fewer jobs over the 3 years. This is countered by large gains in health care, education, and social assistance as well as other service jobs. This fact is indicative of the service, innovation, and knowledge based economy that drives the global market. Increased demand for health care by an aging population is also a driver for new jobs in many of the Panhandle's service hubs as rural residents move to town to be closer to good health care.

One interesting pattern that is consistent throughout the 11 counties is a decrease in employment for arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services. Tourism has long been perceived as one of the strengths for the western Nebraska with its interesting landscape and rich history. However, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado have shown to have much stronger tourism and accommodation industries relative to our region and are even strengths at the national level.

Figure 15: Industry Employment Change 2009-2012



Regional West Medical Center and other regional hospitals are key drivers in the health services employment growth for the region.



The region's unique history and scenery is a regional strength but recreation and visitor industries have seen a decline in employment.





## Journey to Work

While a vast majority of residents in the Panhandle live and work in the same county, much inter county commuting still exists, particularly from the rural counties to the trade hubs.

The economic hubs for the region also experience increases in daytime population due to commuter in flows. This impacts business in both in migration and out migration areas and gives an idea of the swell from both in and out of the county that the community experiences.

Figure 16: 2011 Net Worker Flows

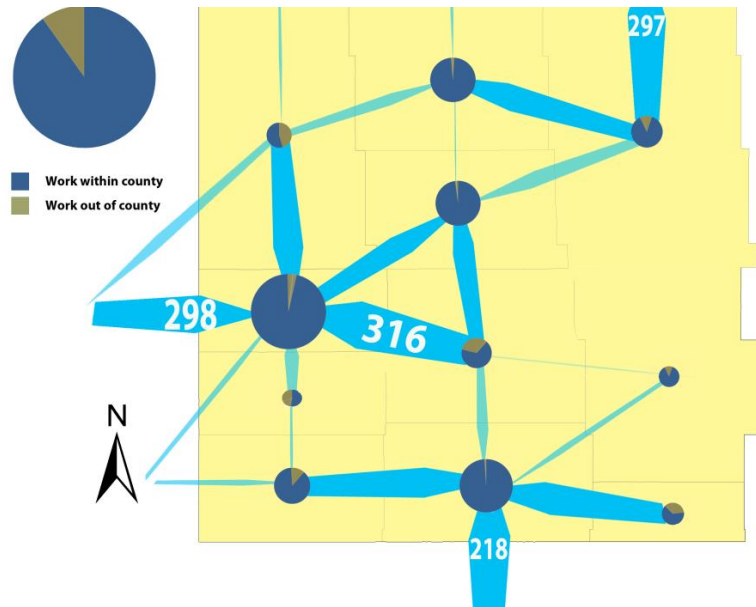


Table 7: Daytime Population for regional cities; 2011

Place	Total resident population	Estimated daytime population	Daytime population change due to commuting	Percent daytime population change due to commuting	Employment residence ratio
Alliance, NE	8,524	8,907	383	4.5	1.09
Chadron, NE	5,812	6,333	521	9.0	1.16
Gering, NE	8,271	6,481	-1,790	-21.6	0.57
Scottsbluff, NE	14,841	18,281	3,440	23.2	1.52
Sidney, NE	6,748	8,094	1,346	19.9	1.38
Torrington, WY	6,281	6,779	498	7.9	1.17
Sterling, CO	14,393	15,421	1,028	7.1	1.17

The Nebraska panhandle's population travels to work mainly through drive alone in a personal vehicle. This is largely the American culture but other options are limited due to distances and type of work. However, anywhere from 45-68% of commuters in the Panhandle hub cities commute less than 10 minutes to work and around 80% have commutes of less than 15 minutes in these communities.

Table 8: Mode of transportation to work

COMMUTING TO WORK	Panhandle	
	Estimate	Percent
Workers 16 years and over	43380	
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	33609	77.5%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	4521	10.4%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	135	0.3%
Walked	2126	4.9%
Other means	554	1.3%
Worked at home	2435	5.6%

## Educational Attainment

An educated workforce is one of the most important factors for a region that is competitive in the global market. How school graduation rates are generally very good across the region. Our region's lack of higher skilled and professional jobs is evident in the lower rates of those with a bachelor degree or higher. Currently, our region's workforce is about six percentage points below the state and national rates for population 25 or older with a bachelor degree or higher.

Table 9: Educational attainment by county

	Population 25 or older	Bachelor Degree or Higher	High School Diploma or Higher
	Estimate	Estimate Percent	Estimate Percent
<b>Banner County</b>	514	107 20.8%	473 92.0%
<b>Box Butte County</b>	7,585	1329 17.5%	6784 89.4%
<b>Cheyenne County</b>	7,029	1775 25.3%	6558 93.3%
<b>Dawes County</b>	5,604	2021 36.1%	5141 91.7%
<b>Deuel County</b>	1,432	248 17.3%	1334 93.2%
<b>Garden County</b>	1,612	314 19.5%	1481 91.9%
<b>Kimball County</b>	2,757	478 17.3%	2397 86.9%
<b>Morrill County</b>	3,477	720 20.7%	2977 85.6%
<b>Scotts Bluff County</b>	24,458	4996 20.4%	21174 86.6%
<b>Sheridan County</b>	3,910	794 20.3%	3496 89.4%
<b>Sioux County</b>	914	239 26.1%	843 92.2%
<b>Panhandle Nebraska</b>	59292	13021 22.0% 28.1%	52658 88.8% 90.4%
<b>United States</b>		28.5%	85.7%

### Institutions of higher education in the region:



*Western Nebraska Community College*

Campus location(s): Scottsbluff (main), Sidney, Alliance

Enrollment: 1109 full-time and 1171 part-time students

Other information: 88 programs offered, 87% job placement rate of WNCC graduates



*Chadron State College*

Campus location(s): Chadron (main), extension in Scottsbluff

Enrollment: 3000 students

Other information: 70 majors and endorsements, 13 masters degree programs



*Eastern Wyoming College*

Campus location(s): Torrington, Wyoming

Enrollment: 2000 students in credit courses, 6500 in non-credit activities

Other info: 3 primary divisions: Arts, Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences; Business and Technology; and Science



*University of Nebraska-Medical Center: College of Nursing*

Campus location(s): Scottsbluff

Enrollment: 82 BSN and 15 graduate students

Other Info: Offers students with simulation labs, cutting edge technological resources for bachelor's degree in Nursing.

#### **Other Skill Building Resources in the Panhandle:**

Along with the bachelor's and associate programs offered at the area higher education institutions, vocational training and business specific trainings are also offered by EWC, CSC, and WNCC. The Guadalupe Center in Scottsbluff is home to the AIM Institute, which strives to bring IT talent development for youth and others. The University of Nebraska Extensions in the Panhandle also engage the community in educational seminars, programs, and skill building.



Educational Service Unit 13 serves the Panhandle in Chadron, Scottsbluff, and Sidney and offers alternative learning, vocational and technical education, migrant education, and technology training programs to continue to develop the region's work force.



Nebraska Department of Labor has offices in Alliance and Scottsbluff and offers resources for trainings, internships, education, job searching, and other tools and resources. Resources for employers are also available for hiring, training, and contracting.



Pine Ridge Job Corps is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the US Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16-24 improve their quality of life through career, technical and academic training. The Center is located 11 miles south of Chadron in Dawes County.

Other services and resources for job skill training, education, and workforce development exist in the Panhandle, and a comprehensive asset mapping initiative would help to identify and specify the specific services. Some include:

Workforce Development Center- Scottsbluff, Alliance, and Sidney

Vocational Rehabilitation Services- Scottsbluff

Advance Services Inc. –Scottsbluff, Alliance, and Sidney



## Income

As this report will show in the cluster analysis portion, wages are generally well below the average for both Nebraska and the nation. The state median household income is \$50,695 and the median family income is \$64,820; both are higher than Cheyenne County's relatively high income, granted the cost of living expenses are generally lower in the Panhandle as well.

**Table 10: Median income by county; 2011**

	Household Income (dollars)	Family Income (dollars)	Married couple Family Income (dollars)	Non-Family Income (dollars)
<b>Cheyenne County</b>	50,143	62,392	72,907	31,860
<b>Box Butte County</b>	44,118	56,011	62,104	25,826
<b>Kimball County</b>	43,191	53,381	59,583	26,429
<b>Sioux County</b>	42,386	53,036	55,227	25,217
<b>Morrill County</b>	42,075	48,019	51,917	25,901
<b>Scotts Bluff County</b>	40,939	51,487	62,075	23,397
<b>Deuel County</b>	37,500	51,210	55,208	19,524
<b>Dawes County</b>	36,396	52,273	56,356	20,692
<b>Garden County</b>	35,861	46,979	57,721	21,658
<b>Sheridan County</b>	34,588	44,184	51,395	22,433
<b>Banner County</b>	27,167	42,361	42,361	19,531

Income distribution in the Panhandle is heavy towards the low income side. While the Panhandle has about the same percentage (19%) of its households in the \$50,000-\$74,999 bracket as the Omaha area, it has a lower percentage in the \$75,000-\$149,000 brackets and more in the under \$35,000 brackets. Fewer professional, science and technology based jobs likely lead to this outcome.

**Table 11: Household income distribution**

	<b>Panhandle</b>	
	Estimate	Percent
Total households	36674	
Less than \$25,000	10495	28.6%
\$25,000 to \$74,999	17552	47.9%
\$75,000 or more	8627	23.5%

**Figure 17: Household Income Distribution: 2012**

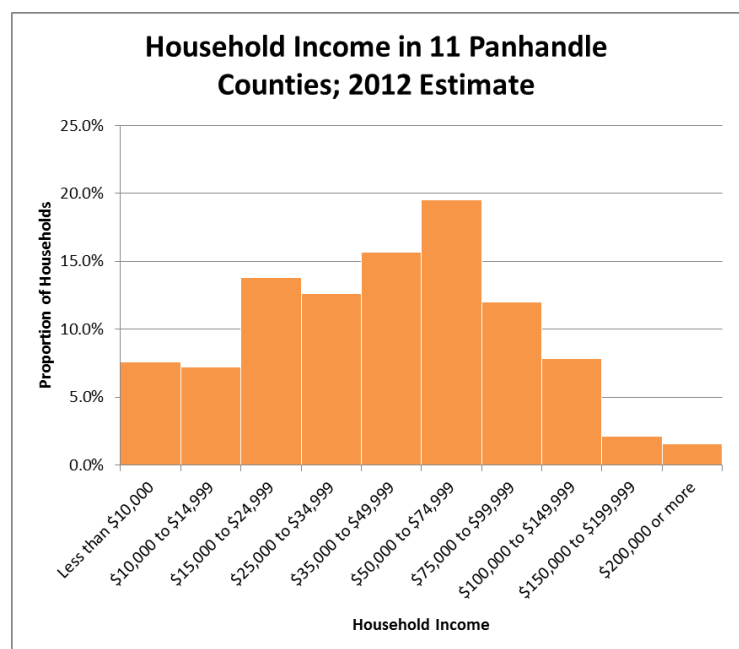




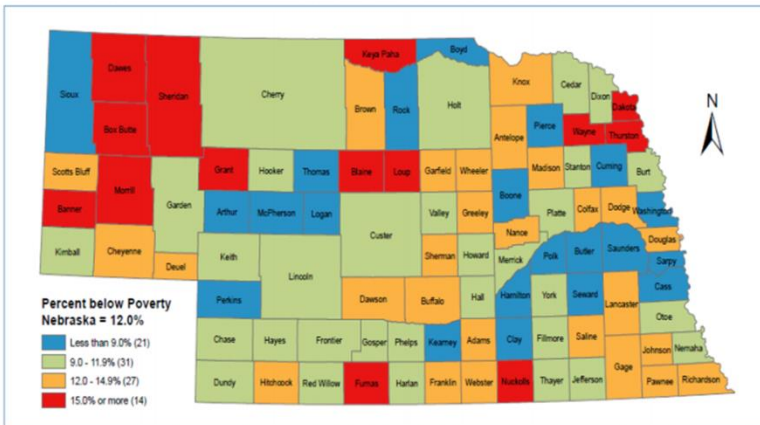
Table 12: Income, Per Capita Income and total households

	Household Income	Per Capita Income	Total Households
<b>Banner County</b>	27,167	19,877	309
<b>Box Butte County</b>	44,118	24,389	4,849
<b>Cheyenne County</b>	50,143	27,296	4,438
<b>Dawes County</b>	36,396	20,345	3,772
<b>Deuel County</b>	37,500	24,821	854
<b>Garden County</b>	35,861	24,923	869
<b>Kimball County</b>	43,191	25,304	1,681
<b>Morrill County</b>	42,075	21,881	2,084
<b>Scotts Bluff County</b>	40,939	22,345	14,886
<b>Sheridan County</b>	34,588	22,576	2,373
<b>Sioux County</b>	42,386	31,635	559
<b>Nebraska</b>	50,695	26,113	715,703
<b>Wyoming</b>	56,380	28,952	219,628
<b>South Dakota</b>	48,010	24,925	318,466
<b>Colorado</b>	57,685	30,816	1,941,193

## Poverty

Poverty in the Panhandle is generally higher than in the rest of the state and nearby metro areas. The college student population in Dawes County skews the poverty rate in that county, but four other Panhandle counties had estimated poverty rates of over 15% in 2011.

Figure 18: Percent below poverty by county



County	Below Poverty
Dawes	24.7%
Banner	17.8%
Sheridan	17.6%
Box Butte	16.6%
Morrill	15.2%
Scotts Bluff	14.7%
Cheyenne	12.9%
Deuel	12.5%
Kimball	11.2%
Garden	10.1%
Sioux County	8.9%
<b>Panhandle</b>	<b>15.5%</b>



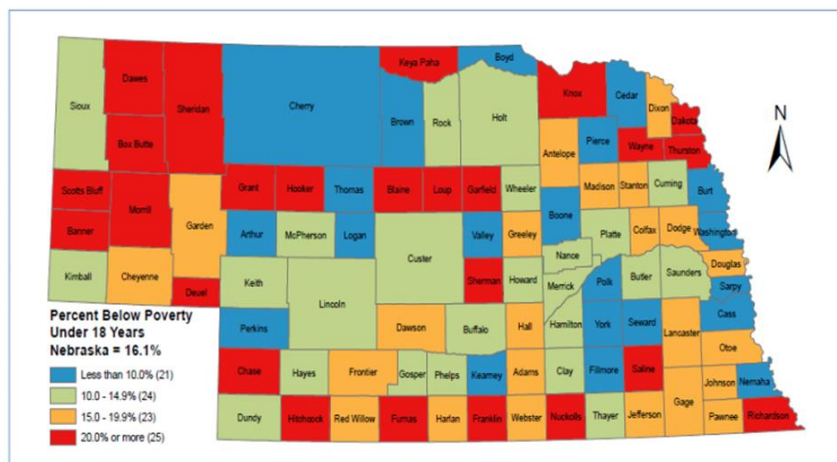
By race, the rate of poverty is high among basically all races except White and Asian. American Indian and Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race) are the largest minority groups in the Panhandle and have poverty rates of 33.1% and 25.6%, respectively. As was stated before, economic disparities in race represent patterns in economic, social, family, and educational environments. Identifying among which populations (by geography, age, race, etc.) certain patterns exist can help to narrow down which factors are leading to certain social and economic outcomes.

**Table 13: Poverty Rate by Race**

	One race	White	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Some other race	Two or more races	Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	White alone, not Hispanic or Latino
<b>Banner County</b>	18.0%	18.0%	-	-	-	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%
<b>Box Butte County</b>	16.3%	13.6%	0.0%	34.4%	2.3%	-	66.7%	30.0%	60.2%	11.1%
<b>Cheyenne County</b>	12.8%	13.1%	25.0%	11.8%	0.0%	-	0.0%	14.7%	41.4%	11.4%
<b>Dawes County</b>	24.8%	24.0%	78.0%	24.4%	19.5%	-	0.0%	17.6%	62.1%	22.7%
<b>Deuel County</b>	12.1%	12.2%	0.0%	-	-	-	0.0%	38.7%	10.0%	12.2%
<b>Garden County</b>	10.2%	10.2%	-	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	-	0.0%	8.6%	10.3%
<b>Kimball County</b>	11.4%	11.6%	0.0%	0.0%	23.5%	-	0.0%	0.0%	39.3%	9.8%
<b>Morrill County</b>	15.5%	15.4%	-	14.7%	0.0%	0.0%	29.8%	2.7%	15.3%	15.5%
<b>Scotts Bluff County</b>	14.6%	13.0%	45.7%	50.3%	8.9%	0.0%	36.2%	18.3%	21.1%	12.0%
<b>Sheridan County</b>	15.5%	14.0%	100.0%	29.0%	36.4%	-	37.5%	56.7%	5.7%	14.3%
<b>Sioux County</b>	8.8%	8.8%	-	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	18.2%	20.0%	8.9%
<b>Panhandle</b>	15.4%	14.2%	54.8%	33.1%	8.6%	0.0%	40.3%	24.3%	26.6%	13.1%
<b>Nebraska</b>	12.2%	10.5%	32.5%	38.2%	16.0%	25.3%	24.3%	25.0%	25.4%	9.4%
<b>United States</b>	14.8%	12.1%	26.5%	27.8%	12.1%	18.7%	26.1%	19.4%	24.1%	10.3%

Particularly high poverty rates exist for children under 18, with seven of the eleven counties having childhood poverty rates of over 20%. Box Butte County has the highest rate at 31.7% and Sioux County has the lowest at just over 10% of children under 18 below poverty.

**Figure 19: Children under 18 years below poverty; 2011**



County	Below Poverty
Box Butte	31.7%
Morrill	27.0%
Banner	25.5%
Sheridan	23.3%
Dawes	22.4%
Scotts Bluff	22.3%
Deuel	20.9%
Cheyenne	15.7%
Garden	15.1%
Kimball	14.6%
Sioux	10.5%
<b>Panhandle</b>	<b>22.7%</b>



The Panhandle does have lower rates of poverty among people with lower educational attainment than the nation and metro areas. Our region’s 33% poverty rate for those with a high school degree or less is drastically lower than big cities such as Denver (50%), Rapid City (43%), or Chicago (52%). Table 7 also gives credence to the importance of higher education in being financially stable, with under 4% of those with a bachelor’s degree or higher being below the poverty level.

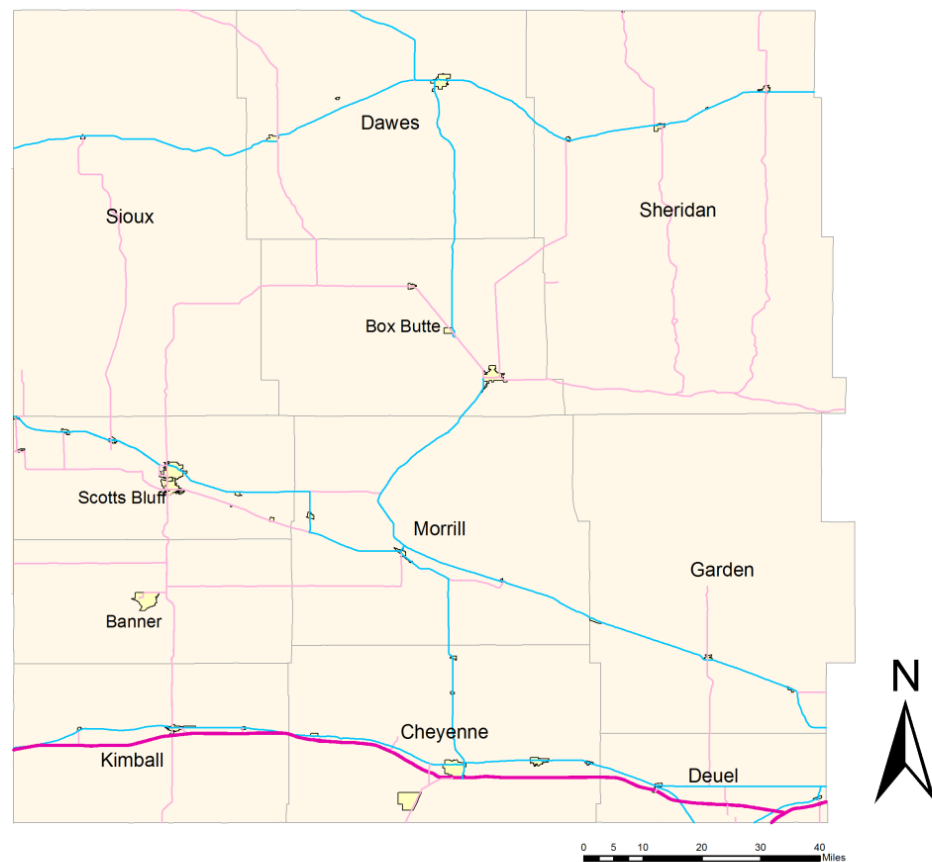
Table 14: Educational attainment and poverty

	Panhandle	Nebraska	United States
	Percent below poverty level	Percent below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT			
Population 25 years and over	10.8%	8.8%	11.4%
Less than high school graduate	22.8%	23.1%	26.5%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	11.1%	10.3%	13.1%
Some college, associate's degree	11.3%	8.4%	9.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher	3.9%	3.3%	4.1%

# Transportation & Infrastructure

## Roads and Highways

The Panhandle of Nebraska has three main east to west corridors through the region and numerous north-south routes that connect individual communities. The most traveled north south routes are Highway 71 with its 4-lane access from I-80 to Scottsbluff, and US Highway 385 which connects Sidney to the South Dakota border via Bridgeport, Alliance, and Chadron.





## Heartland Expressway

The Heartland Expressway is a vision of a 4-lane divided highway that would connect the Nebraska Panhandle and Eastern Wyoming to markets in Rapid City, SD and Denver, CO via Alliance, NE, Scottsbluff, NE and Brush, CO. Currently a segment of US 385 from Angora to Alliance is programmed for construction but much of the route is still 2-lane and is not scheduled to be completed.

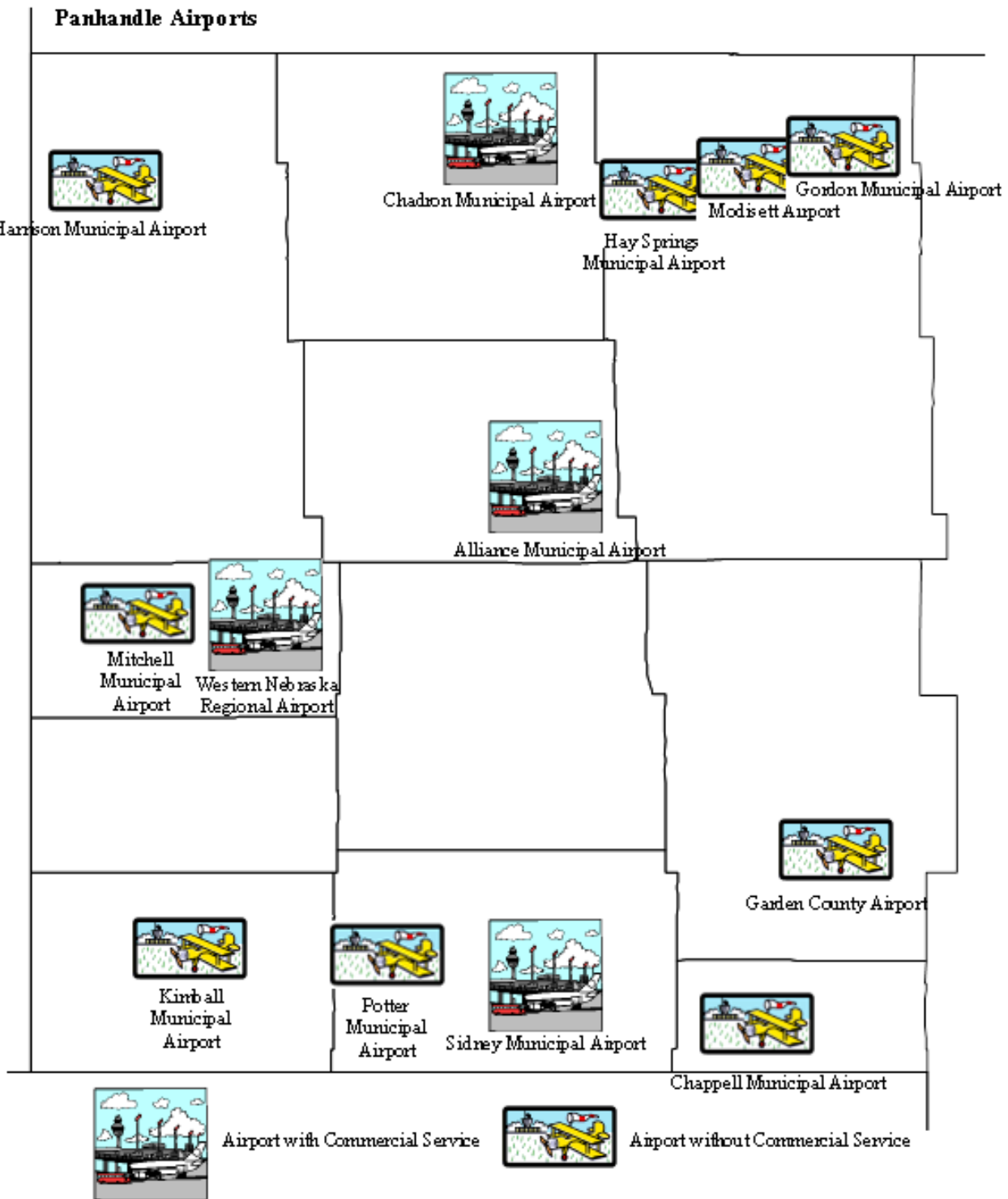
Figure 20: Heartland Expressway completion



### Ports-to-Plains Connectivity

The Heartland Expressway is part of a larger international trade corridor, called the Ports-to-Plains Alliance, which would connect the ports of the Mexico-Texas border to Alberta via the western Great Plains. This corridor accounts for 25% of US trade with Mexico and Canada and shares commonalities in rich fossil fuel and renewable energy resources. Nebraska exports to Canada via trucking increase by nearly \$500 million from 2009 to 2012. While Nebraska's trade with Mexico is primarily via rail, it still exported \$343 million in 2012 via trucking and Texas stands as one of Nebraska's largest trading partners.





The Panhandle is well positioned to have a competitive transportation advantage from its extensive rail line access. The region is served by two major railroads, a regional railroad, and a connecting short line service. The **Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad** and the **Union Pacific Railroad** provide a large majority of railroad activity in the Panhandle and represent a significant base industry in the Panhandle. Most of the cargo in the northern and central Panhandle is related to the transportation of Wyoming PRB coal. The **Sidney and Lowe Shortline Railroad** is a local Class III switching line that connect the Union Pacific at Brownson to Burlington Northern Sante Fe at Huntsman. The **DM&E** (Dakota, Minnesota, and Eastern) is a Class II Railroad that provides the northern Panhandle with rail access across South Dakota and into southern Minnesota and northern Iowa along the old Chicago NW rail lines.

## NEBRASKA RAILROADS

PREPARED BY  
DEPARTMENT OF ROADS  
JANUARY 1, 2012

### RAILROADS

- UPRR Union Pacific Railroad
- BNSF BNSF Railway
- DM&E Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern RR Corp.



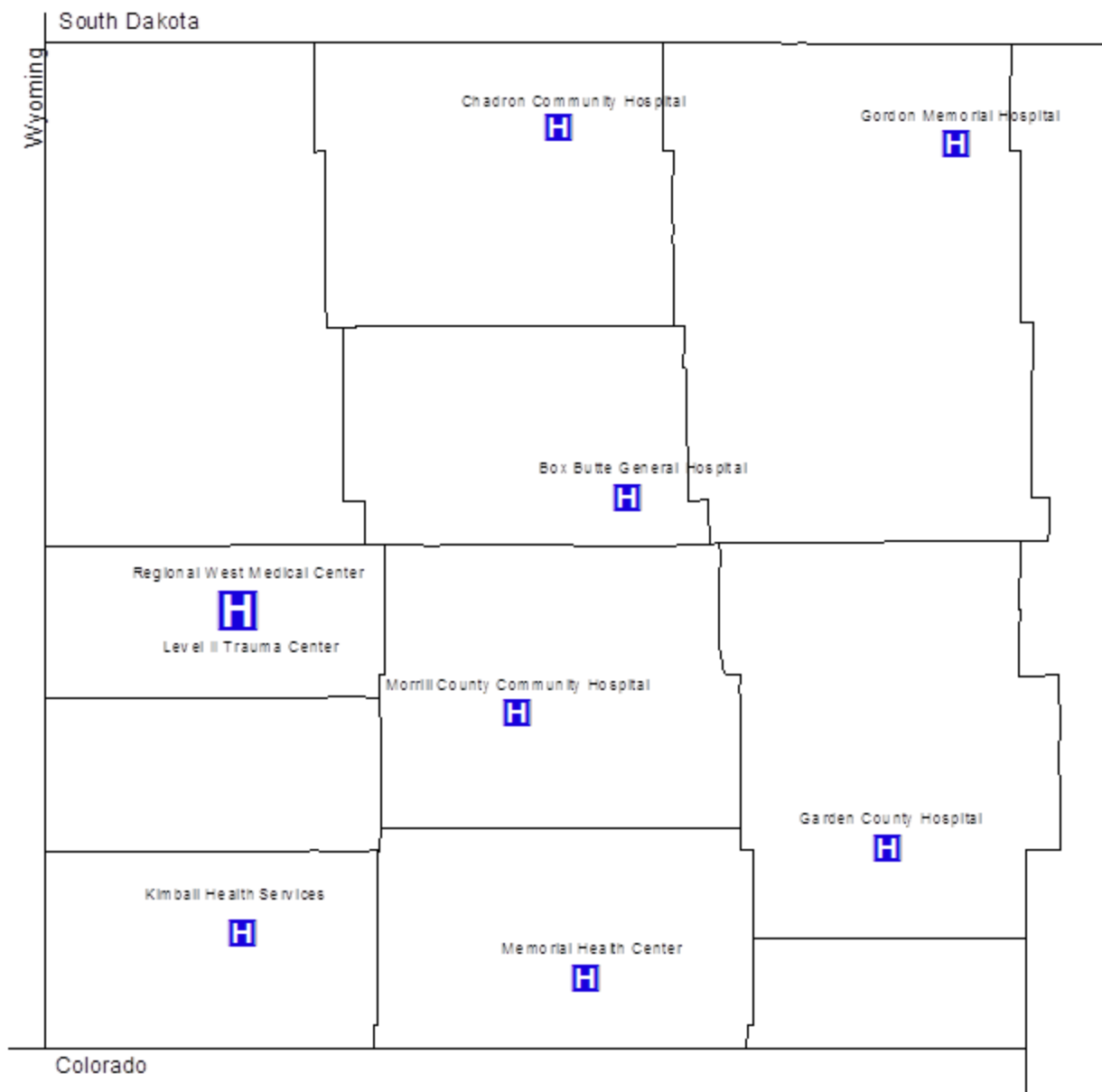




The Nebraska Panhandle has eight hospitals. Five of these hospitals (Box Butte General Hospital in Alliance; Chadron Community Hospital in Chadron; Garden County Hospital in Oshkosh; Gordon Memorial Hospital in Gordon; Kimball Health Services, Memorial Health Center in Sidney, and Morrill County Community Hospital in Bridgeport) all provide general hospital services to their local communities and surrounding areas.

Regional West Medical Center in Scottsbluff, as its name implies is a regional medical center. This hospital is one of only three hospitals in Nebraska that serves as a Level II Trauma Center. Regional West Medical Center also is the only Panhandle hospital that provides emergency air transportation services.

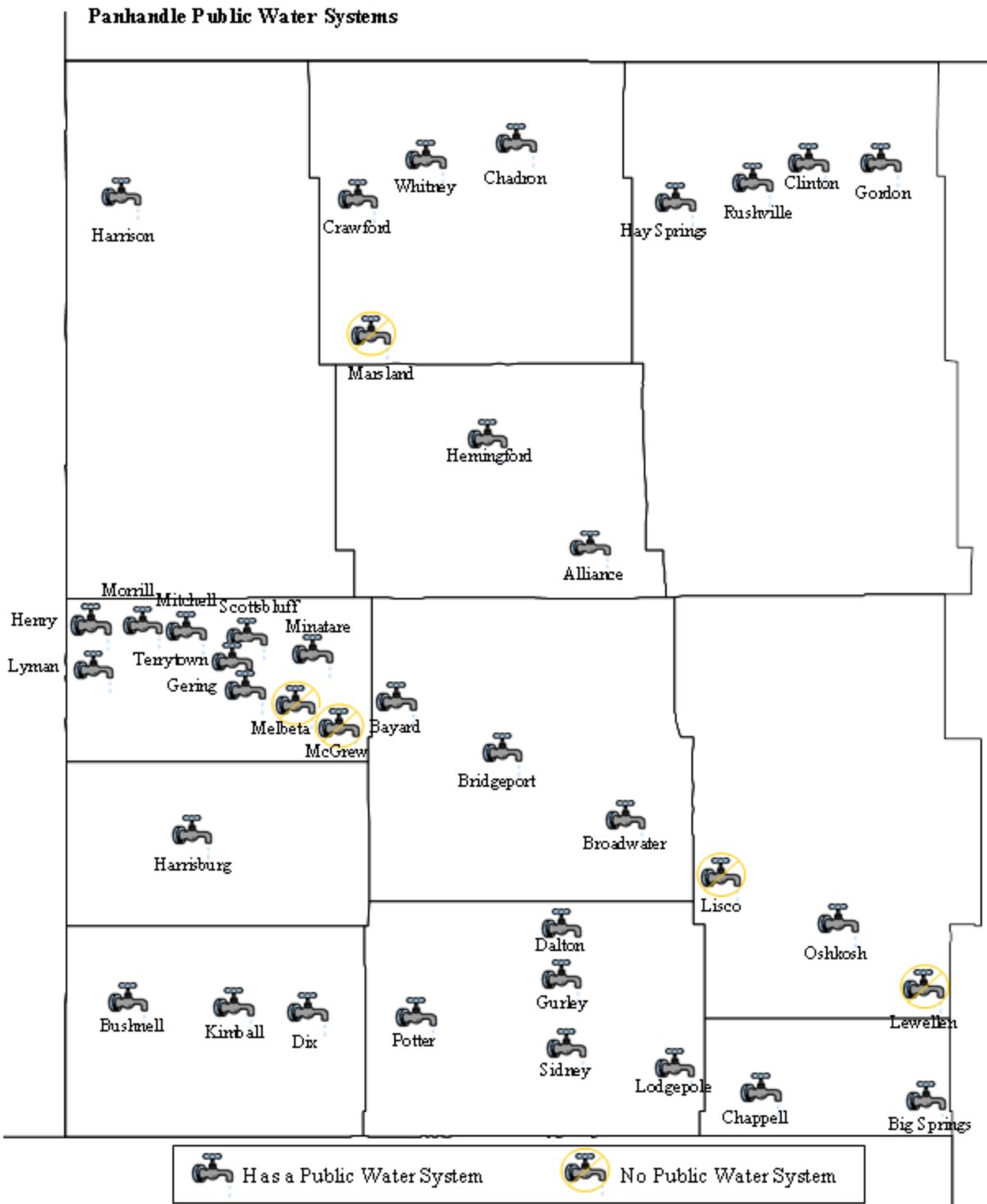
#### Panhandle Medical Providers





## Public Water

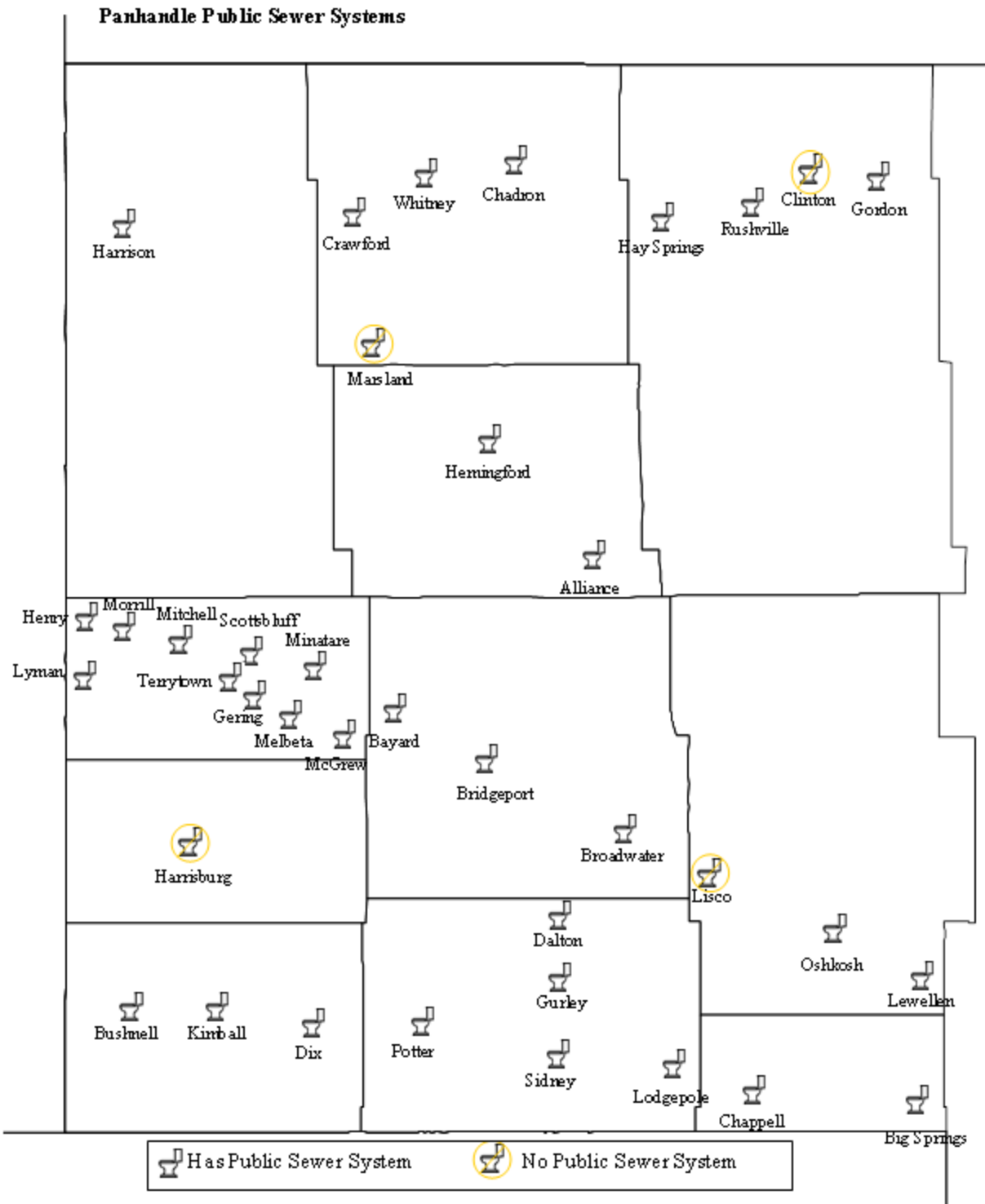
All but four of the Panhandle's incorporated communities (Lewellen, McGrew, Melbeta, and Clinton) have public water systems. In addition, the unincorporated "towns" of Marsland and Lisco do not have a public water system.





## Sanitary Sewer Systems

Clinton is the only incorporated town in the Panhandle without a public sewer system. The Unincorporated towns Harrisburg and Lisco do not have a public sewer system.



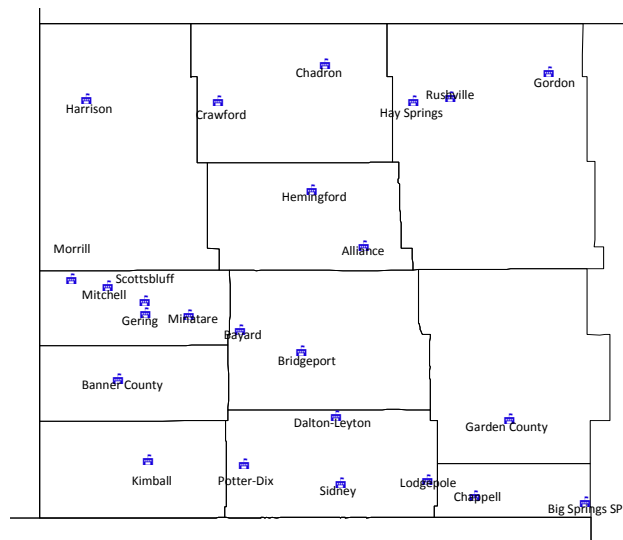
## High Schools

The Panhandle has 24 public high schools, but no longer has any private high schools. These high schools are located in Harrison, Crawford, Chadron, Hay Springs, Rushville, Gordon, Oshkosh, Big Springs, Chappell, Lodgepole, Sidney, Dalton, Potter, Kimball, Harrisburg, Morrill, Mitchell, Scottsbluff, Gering, Minatare, Bayard, and Bridgeport.

In addition, the Pine Ridge Civilian Conservation Corp, 11 miles south of Chadron, operates the Pine Ridge Job Corps.

The Pine Ridge Job Corps provides training to unemployed and under-skilled youths between the ages of 16 and 24.. The Corp is operated by the USDA Forest Service and is funded by the US Department of Labor

### Panhandle High Schools





## Regional Economic Development Organizations

There are many organizations working for positive progress and economic development in the region. Understanding these organizations helps us to better understand how to best utilize the organizations to get the most benefit.

### Local Community & Economic Development Organizations

These organizations answer to a specific local entity or multiple local entities, be it a county or city. Their organizations support economic development activities and are charged with creating jobs and bringing opportunities to their communities. Housing, business recruitment and expansion, networking, infrastructure development, brownfield mitigation, and other community development activities are all within the scope of work for these organizations.

- Box Butte Development Corporation
- City of Kimball Economic Development
- City of Sidney Community Development
- Goshen County Economic Development Corporation
- Northwest Nebraska Development Corporation: Dawes County
- Twin Cities Development: Scottsbluff & Gering

### Regional Organizations

These organizations cover a variety of activities from labor, to tourism, information hubs, economic development, community education, and public health. These organizations are often regional collaborations between multiple entities or serve the region as a whole.

- High Plains Compass
- Nebraska Department of Labor
- Panhandle Area Development District
- Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services
- Panhandle Public Health District
- University of Nebraska- Panhandle Extension
- Western Nebraska Development Network
- Western Nebraska Tourism Coalition

### **County Commerce and Tourism Organizations**

Each county has its own specific tourism or economic chamber which is also local in nature but has a more regional scope than development organizations for specific cities. These organizations are important to the vitality and vision of each area of the Panhandle and are great sources for information and great partners for implementation.

- Cheyenne County Chamber
- Cheyenne County Visitors Committee
- Dawes County Joint Planning
- Discover Dawes County
- Deuel County Tourism
- Goshen County Chamber of Commerce
- Kimball County Tourism
- Kimball/Banner County Chamber of Commerce
- Morrill County Visitors Committee
- Northwest Nebraska High Country
- Oshkosh/Garden County Chamber
- Scotts Bluff County Area Visitor's Bureau
- Scottsbluff-Gering United Chamber
- Visit Sheridan County
- Visit Northwest Nebraska: Sioux County

### **Working Better Together**

In this CEDS process, Panhandle Area Development District takes the lead to understand what the region needs and seeing the big picture of actions to improve the region. All of the organizations listed and many more that are not listed will be critical in the implementation of the regional strategy. The other organizations that are regional in scope are also great partners for facilitating dialogue and assessing the big picture of how all the Panhandle's components work together and how each area's assets can be best leveraged versus the greater region, nation, and globe. The organizations at the local level provide great insight to the process as well and will have the resources, connections, and local knowledge to actually carry out the strategies outlined in this plan. Planning and strategy formulation is necessary for smart investments and use of resources but the planning will only matter if people on the ground are working to bring it to fruition.



### **Importance of the Private Sector**

Vitally important in implementing the strategy is the input and involvement of the private sector. In both formulating and carrying out the plan, it's the business owners, employees, and workers who are the ones creating jobs and paying wages. Involvement of the private sector partners in this plan has helped understand what gaps exist in things like communication, workforce, and infrastructure. Continued partnerships with folks in the private sector is important in knowing what investments will help to grow their businesses and what may not give us as good of a return on our investment. Critical in private sector involvement for this plan moving forward is the support for new and current entrepreneurs. Large public investments to support private sector activity is important but in a region with over 85% of business establishments having fewer than 10 employees, to focus on the individual needs and personal growth in things like book keeping and business planning.

### **Structure of Collaboration**

PADD is currently striving to involve more private sector businesses into its membership to help influence and guide its planning and economic development activities. Regional coalition group meetings will also involve private sector business leaders and entrepreneurs for networking and ideas on where to make investments in workforce, infrastructure, and communication.

## Economic Development Problems and Opportunities

The regional problems and opportunities will drive the strategy for development in the future. This section will identify past, present, and projected future economic development investments in the region to assess what is already in place. Identifying and understanding the region's economic clusters is also important to leveraging our resources and making smart investments in infrastructure and workforce.

### **Most common weaknesses in Economic Development**

While each community has its unique barriers to progress, some common themes emerged from the public meetings, surveys, interviews, and research. The most common problems identified were:

- Lack of Quality Housing
- Low wages
- Lack of highly skilled workforce
- Youth leaving the area
- Lack of professional opportunities
- Lack of entrepreneurial networking and support
- Lack of regional and local cooperation
- Anti-social behavior (crime, unnecessary dependence, etc.)
- Poorly maintained buildings and property
- Too few recreational opportunities
- Duplication of services

### **Most common opportunities in Economic Development**

Like the problems, opportunities are unique to each community but a some common ground emerged in where the public and leaders thought our greatest potential lay. The most common opportunities identified were:

- Preparing buildings and properties to be shovel and move-in ready
- Regionally coordinated alternative education
- Connecting students with employers through mentoring, internships, and service learning
- Support networks for parents
- Entrepreneurial networking, mentoring, and seminar opportunities
- Business recruitment for the region
- Improved hub for information and communication
- Alternative energies
- Cross cultural/generational collaborations
- Investments in shared spaces
- Skill building systems and organizations
- Increased technological education and web presence
- Private-public housing initiative
- More moderate-high income housing



## Cluster Strengths

To succeed and grow in the global market, regions need to be competitive through a critical mass of mutually supportive businesses and companies. Success is more attainable when a region sticks to one of its strengths and strives to be the best at it. Clusters are about recognizing a region's economic strength and then building around that strength through related businesses and policies to create a competitive advantage. The reasoning from the private sector side is that focusing on the regional strengths will provide a better opportunity for rising above the competition. The reasoning from the public side of things, is that investments in these strong and growing regional industries will create a better return of investment and thus a better chance of increased prosperity.

### What is a cluster?

A cluster is just a group of related activities. The 'Health Services' cluster, for example, includes: hospitals, home and residential care, medical laboratories, drug stores, etc. The energy cluster includes oil and gas drilling, transport and logistics, metal and piping manufacturing, wind turbine component engineering, etc. Building a critical mass of businesses, services, workforce, and policy that are able to support the unique geographical strengths can build a competitive edge in a region that is not easily duplicated in other parts of the world.

### Analysis

Analyzing the industry clusters in the Panhandle helps leaders identify where our greatest potential lies. The analysis relies on comparing local employment and wages in particular industry clusters to employment and wages in the nation. If the proportion people employed in a certain industry compared to the region's population is higher than the same proportion at the national level, then it is concluded that the industry is a strength for the Panhandle. The number that results from this location is called the Location Quotient (LQ), and the higher above '1' the stronger the regional industry is relative to the nation.

$$LQ = \frac{(\text{employment in region for industry } x) / (\text{population in region})}{(\text{employment in nation for industry } x) / (\text{population in nation})}$$

### Panhandle Cluster Strengths

The industries listed in the image below were analyzed with the above equation and had an LQ of greater than 1 and at least 20 employees, since low population and worker counts could skew the strength of an industry relative to the nation. The industries listed were, essentially, stronger than the national average, or stronger than what would be expected for our region. However industries with LQs of 1.25 or greater show a greater chance at being a regional strength.

Information for this map was pulled from the "Innovation in American Regions" website, a 'StatsAmerica' site. Goshen County was included in the analysis since it is included in the Scotts Bluff economic region by the cluster mapping project ([clustermapping.us](http://clustermapping.us)).

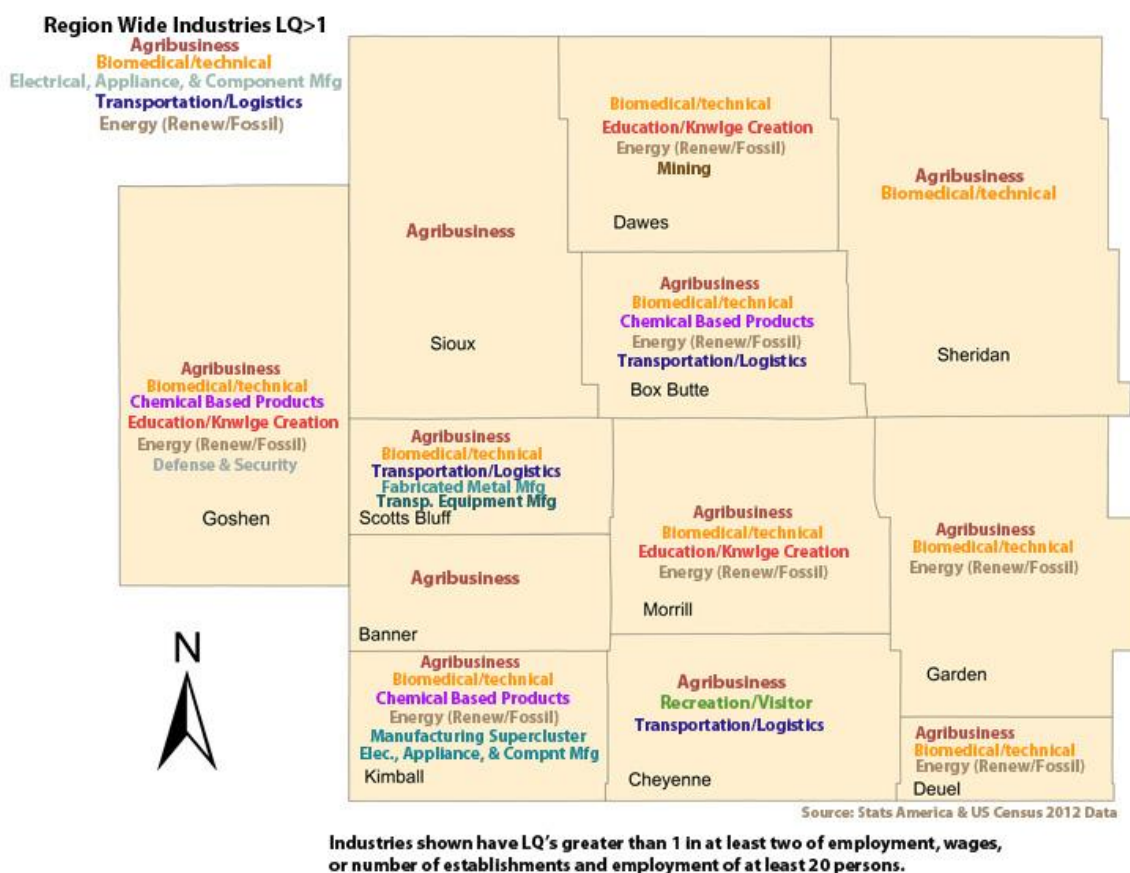


Regional Industry Strengths are:

- Agribusiness, Food Processing & Technology
- Biomedical/Biotechnical
- Electrical, Appliance, & Component Manufacturing
- Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing
- Energy (Renewable and Fossil fuel)
- Mining

Two that were close were Visitor and Recreation Industries and Transportation and Logistics

Figure 21: Regional Cluster Strengths vs. Nation



On a national scale, industries that are growing and continuing to grow are internet publishers and electronic shopping, health services and devices, energy and oil, and biotechnology research.

Industries that have not recovered since the recession are anything related to housing and reality, book and print related industries, savings institutions, and high labor manufacturing. It is important to consider these trends because they will affect the potential and prospective sustainability of these industries in the Panhandle.





The map above also shows the specializations that are largely shaped by the largest employer in each community. For example, Cheyenne County has strong visitor and retail industry likely due to Cabela's and Dawes County performs well with Knowledge Creation due Chadron State College.

### Leveraging Industry Strengths

What does building from our industry strengths look like?

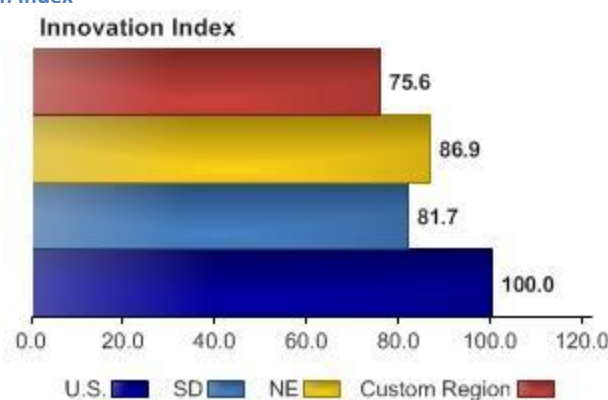
- Workforce
- Lowering costs and barriers for industry cluster growth
- Entrepreneurship
- Research, development, and technology investments
- Infrastructure and geographical advantages

Workforce development is the first and foremost important factor in growing our industry strengths for high skilled, wealth creating positions. For economic development leaders and public officials it is also important that attention be paid to the gaps and needs of these specific industry cluster strengths so that new products and ideas can be brought quickly to the global market. Since the Panhandle isn't a 'hot-spot' for technological, idea, or business development, it's important also to grow the entrepreneurs who are already in our region and nurture youth who have roots in the community to start their own business at home when they are older. While the Panhandle will not likely catch the patent output of the front range or other areas of the country, research and development of ideas is important for translating our region's talent into new ideas and product development. Lastly, is utilizing and marketing our infrastructure and geography to our advantage. These are all consistent with the 2010 Battelle Technology Partnership Practice study completed for the state Department of Economic Development and Department of Labor. These points will be expanded on further in the goals, objectives, and strategies portion of the document.

### Innovation

Now seen as critically important to economic development, is innovation. Innovation is the development of new ideas and regions which can take these ideas to market swiftly and efficiently will be rewarded. Research and development investments are important but fluid structures of communication and low costs of idea exchanging are also important. As we see in the following figure, the region's innovation index lags behind the surrounding states' indices.

Figure 22: Innovation Index

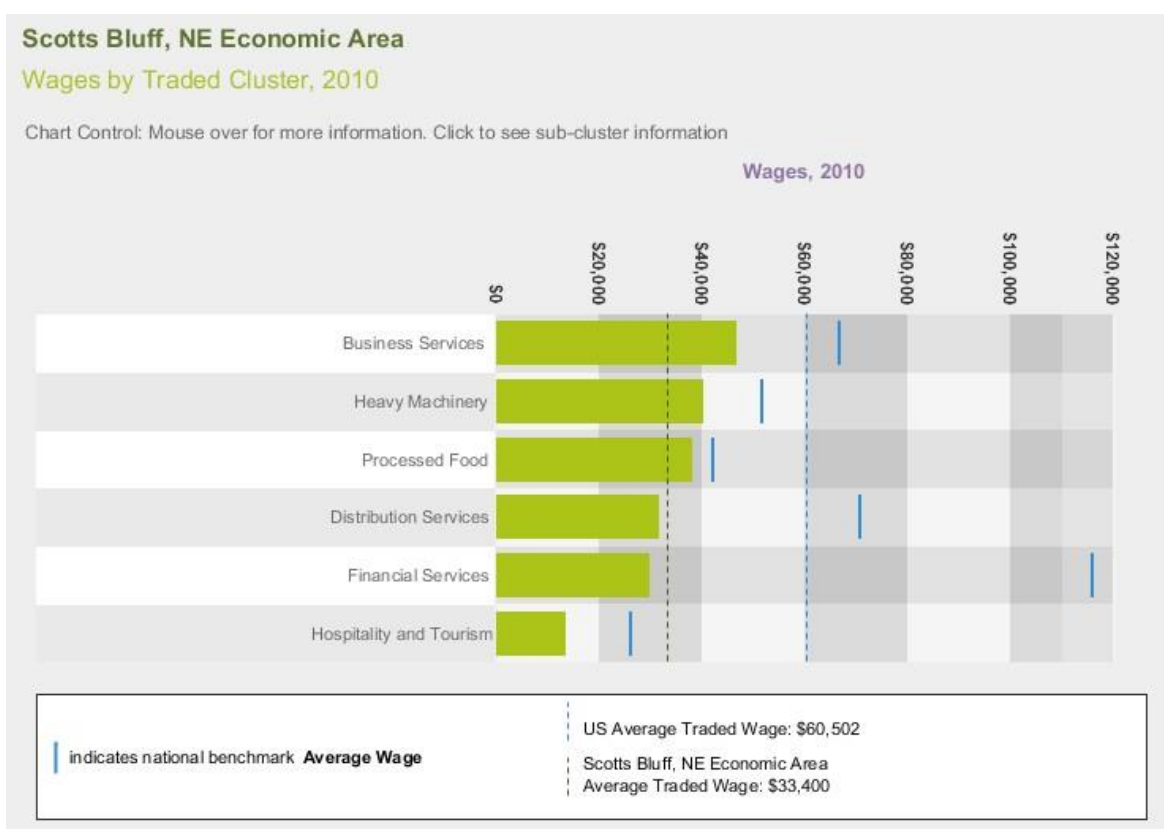


## Wages

One of the most resounding problems across the region is the lack of higher wage job opportunities and the lower wages when compared to the nation for the same job. While the cost of living is also generally lower and metropolitan, state, and national averages, putting more money in the pockets of regional residents is a concern. Opportunities to raise wages will likely lie with opportunities to create and recruit businesses that require higher skilled positions.

Wages for local health services was the only industry cluster where the average regional wage was higher than the nation at an average wage of \$71,041.

Figure 23: Traded cluster wages



## Job Creation

A look at the industries that created or lost jobs over a span of time can also be a helpful indicator in determining where the best return of investment may be for economic development.



Figure 24: Traded cluster job creation

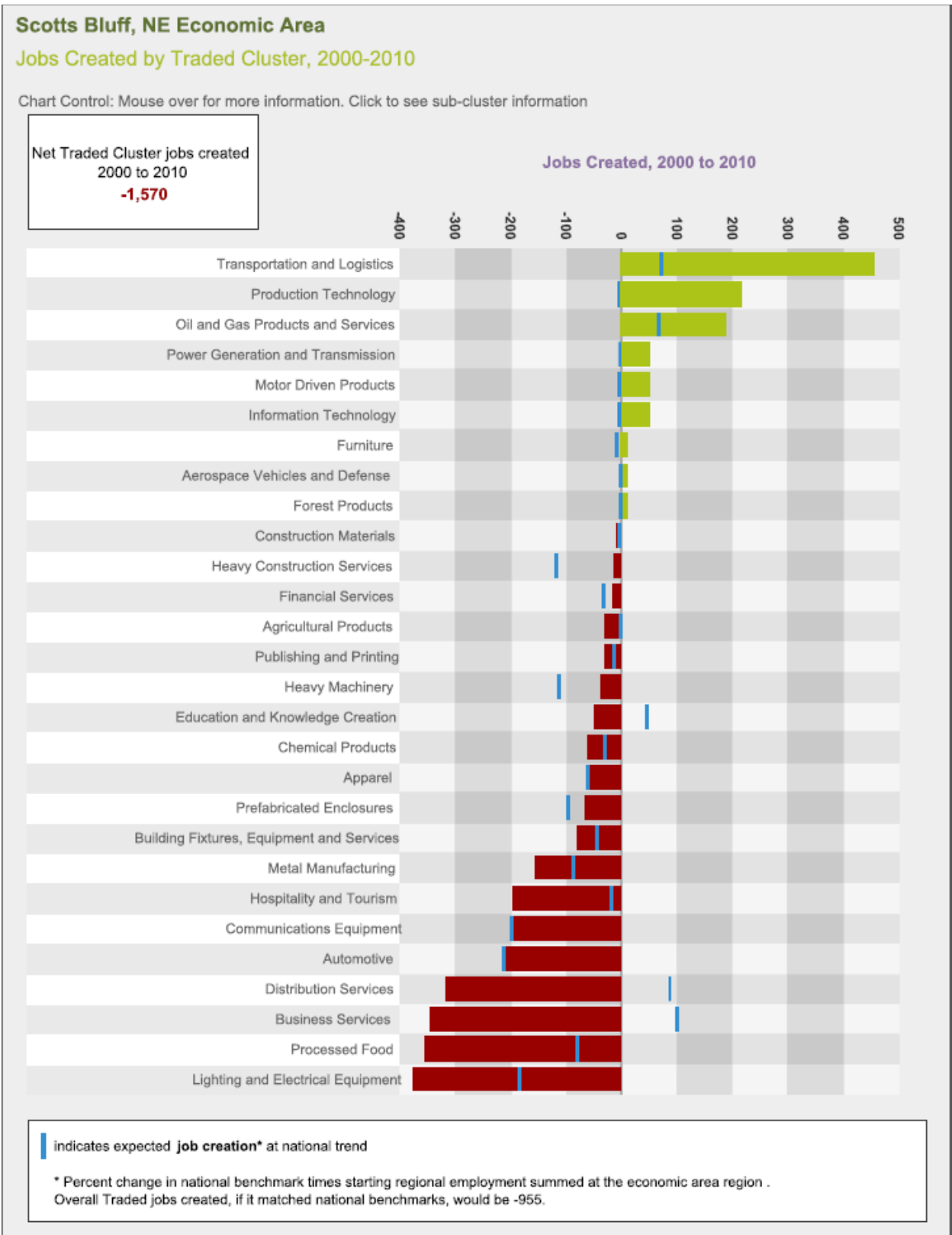
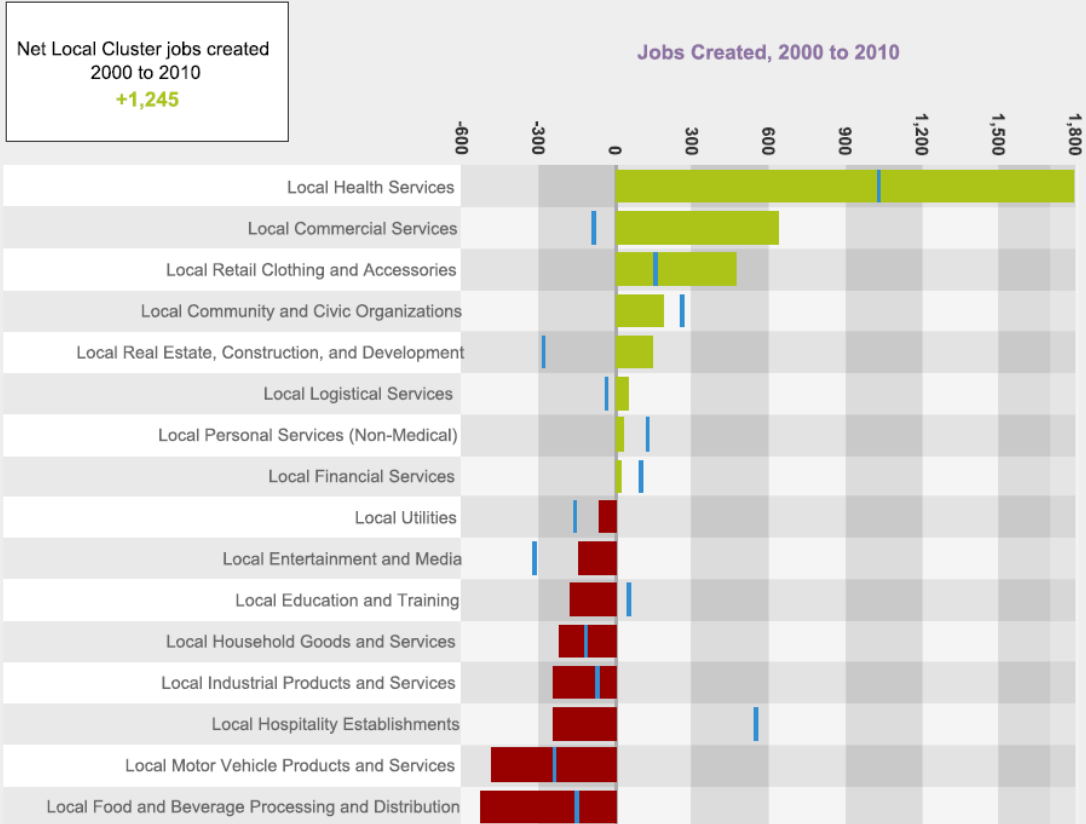


Figure 25: Local cluster job creation 2000-2010

### Scotts Bluff, NE Economic Area

#### Jobs Created by Local Cluster, 2000-2010

Chart Control: Mouse over for more information. Click to see sub-cluster information



indicates expected **job creation\*** at national trend

\* Percent change in national benchmark times starting regional employment summed at the economic area region .  
Overall Local jobs created, if it matched national benchmarks, would be +840.





## Past, Present, and Future Economic Development Investments

Rural Nebraska Health Care Network installed a **750 mile fiber network** which connects to national research networks such as National Lambda Rail and Internet 2 in Denver. The network connects 9 primary care hospitals and dozens of affiliated clinics to create one of the most advanced and robust medical technology networks in the state.

Outdoor gear retailer Cabela's, headquartered in Sidney, NE, has partnered with the city of Sidney to plan and build \$200 million of potentially nearly **\$700 million in housing, medical, commercial, and city development projects**.

Work on a portion of the **Heartland Expressway** on US 385 between Anrora and Alliance is anticipated to begin in the next five years. This will increase safety and efficiency between Alliance and points south.

The **Niobrara Shale Play** will be an area to watch for drilling and development in the next several years, though the potential is said to taper off quickly upon crossing the Nebraska border.

**Local Tax Increment Financing, Local Sales Tax (LB 840), downtown revitalization plans, and other economic development tools** and projects have occurred in many Panhandle communities.

The city of Scottsbluff has contracted with a private consulting firm for the **development of an economic development strategy for the area in and surrounding Scotts Bluff County**.

Twin Cities Development and the city of Bayard have been involved in the **mitigation and development of brownfield sites**.

The city of Torrington recently completed a **master plan for Torrington Municipal Airport (TOR)** which provides a vision for the airport over the next 20 years including planning for facilities, capital improvement program, and analyze future demand.

**Dawes County Lodging Tax** will provide the Northwest Nebraska county with an extra \$50,000-\$70,000 a year in revenue from the extra 2% in lodging tax.

The **High Point Visitor Center** opened in 2013 in Kimball, Nebraska. This center was supported by the regional community and promotes the area through with information, directions, and arts to visitors passing by on Interstate 80.

Recently, Alliance, Chadron, and Gering have become **economic development certified communities**, joining Scottsbluff and Sidney in the useful recognition. Certified communities are certified by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development as places that have been identified and documented as ready for economic development opportunities. These communities are marketed and publicly recognized to businesses looking to locate within the state. These communities also become more competitive for grants and NIFA housing applications as well as become eligible for Downtown Revitalization competitive funds. Communities that wish to be recognized as economic development certified must go through an application process as well as meet specific requirements such as having an economic development plan.

The Chadron area received a **4.9 million dollar grant to replace bridges, switches, and rails** in 2012. It also attracted Transportation Services, Inc., a railcar repair company.

**Other Plans and Resources Incorporated into this strategy**

2010 Battelle Technology Partnership Practice study for Nebraska Industry Strengths

2006 Pillars of Growth in Nebraska's Non-Metropolitan Economy; University of Nebraska- Omaha

Crossing the Next Regional Frontier: Information and Analytics Linking Regional competitiveness to

Investment in a Knowledge Based Economy

Growing Rural Innovation-Based Economies: Kansas Opportunity Innovation Network

Unlocking Rural Competitiveness: The role of regional clusters

The Rainforest: The Secret to Building the Next Silicon Valley

Globalization and Knowledge Clusters for Rural America



# Framework for Progress

## Increasing regional competitiveness

**GOAL** Increase regional economic competitiveness by leveraging the five target industries for a more diverse economy of sustainable businesses with quality jobs.

- Objective** • Create an asset map for each industry, outlining the capabilities, needs, and connections of businesses in the cluster.
- Strategic projects, programs, and activities**
- PADD will partner with the economic development organizations (TCD, BBDC, NNDC, Cities of Kimball and Sidney) to identify all businesses in two primary industries.
  - Create a survey to assess business' capacity, gaps, and network connections.
  - Aggregate data from surveys and disseminate information to respondents and the public.

### *Best Practice: Kansas Opportunity Innovation Network*

- Increase capacity among economic development entities to maximize effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies.
  -
- Prepare policy, human groups, and infrastructure to be poised for action for **energy** opportunities.
  - Work with counties which have wind energy potential to establish guidelines for zoning, roads, and environmental impact issues for big and small wind development.
  - Encourage new or existing groups in counties with wind potential to become resident experts on wind energy and to pursue commercial wind opportunities.
  - Continue to advocate for the Heartland Expressway, to provide 4 lane divided highway access through the Panhandle to facilitate increased truck traffic in the development of turbines and fossil fuel extraction.
- Pursue **agricultural** innovation opportunities through emphasis and investment in research and discovery, integration of technology, and connection of regional students to private employers.
  - Utilize higher education institutions and UNL extension to help farmers and ranchers integrate greater technological improvements in their operations.
  - Connect college and university research projects in local and other regional institutions of higher education to current agriculture operations and encourage more research projects in the Panhandle.
  - Continue the annual agricultural summit and agribusiness committee supported through the Scottsbluff-Gering United Chamber of Commerce and UNL-Panhandle research and extension center.
  - Continue to maintain and expand experiential learning opportunities such as those through the Chadron State College Ranchland Management program to connect prospective farmers and ranchers to seasoned veterans.



- Strengthen the **Biotechnical/bio-medical** industry in the region through strengthening partnerships, aggressive marketing, outstanding facilities, and legislation that streamlines regulatory burdens.
  - Strengthen partnerships between regional hospitals and medical facilities through the Rural Nebraska Healthcare Network (RNHN).
  - Expand communication in health care through integration of other health professionals into discussion about rural health needs.
- Expand **Transportation and Logistics** businesses by seeking out opportunities for niche services and linking transportation and logistics businesses with other thriving industries in the Panhandle and surrounding region's industries in the Front Range and South Dakota.
  - Research the potential in Scottsbluff-Gering becoming a Foreign Trade Zone or Subzone for as a transportation, manufacturing, and distribution.
  - Market the region's transportation and logistics businesses to other national companies seeking centralized distribution and transportation hub or other carrying needs.
  - Work with transportation and logistics businesses to understand their labor needs and coordinate talent recruiting efforts accordingly, likely looking to gain benefits from cultural and gender diversity.
  - Collectively seek out the technological improvements in communication and efficiency to position our region's transportation and logistics to be more competitive.
  - From the capacity and gaps survey of each industry, identify which other industries have gaps in transportation and logistics that could be met by businesses in the Panhandle.
- Strive to build depth in **Advanced Manufacturing** and work with leading businesses to seek out the best market gaps and opportunities on a global scale.
  - Build depth within specific product niches to offer the best product, through technology, talent, process, and reach.
  - Provide avenues of financing and channeling research and development into new products that can be produced in the region. Linkages between research and university institutions, talent, and industry leaders will be critical for product development, innovations, and technical assistance.
  - Create an industry collaborative group that meets to network and share ideas and information, particularly information on modernization and technology advancement.
  - Ensure cost competitiveness for high volume Advanced Manufacturing users through dialogue and responsiveness by utility companies and jurisdictions.
- Expand global and national scope of target industries and businesses within target clusters.
  - Prioritize expansion of businesses aiming to expand to global markets, with the recognition that the best opportunity may not be the easiest or safest.
  - PADD and economic development organizations should partner with willing businesses and state agencies to research national and foreign market opportunities.





## Innovation and Entrepreneurship

**Grow and sustain a culture for small business, innovation, and entrepreneur growth and development to fill gaps and reach new frontiers.**

- Create and provide a ‘package’ of local and regional resources and contacts for new businesses and entrepreneurs.
  - Work with local communities to build local and regional packages of finance, tax, business planning, networking, and other key information for entrepreneurs.
  - Promote local resources on all community websites and post information on the PADD website.
- Increase accessibility to sources of capital in the region for small businesses and entrepreneurs including gap financing and seed money.
  - Build capacity and publicize full spectrum of resources for capital and funding alternatives
  - Facilitate the connection of ideas to resources both within and outside of our region, maintaining a database of projects, new businesses, and startups with strong potential.
- Grow social entrepreneurship for sustainable social services and creative businesses with a social purpose.
  - Continue to support workshops for social entrepreneurship with Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services.
  - Plan and help host a regional conference on social entrepreneurship.
  - Develop and offer courses through PADD on business planning for organizations and businesses with a social purpose.
  - Maintain a site of resources on the PADD website for business planning, articles of interest, success stories, and resources for contact.
- Increase opportunities and networks for entrepreneurship education through traditional and non-traditional education settings.
  - Create networks for collaboration and information sharing among new and old entrepreneurs, focusing on opportunity driven problem solving rather than linear problem solving.
  - Enhance entrepreneurship and problem solving education to K-12 students in experiences, coursework, and mentorship.
  - Colleges/extension/service learning
  - Informal groups with more of a fun and social atmosphere
- Promote social events that spur relationships and conversation between innovators, business owners, and decision makers.
  - Host yearly PADD annual meeting to bring people together from all over the Panhandle.
  - Promote groups such as NEXT Young Professionals, Western Nebraska Bicycling Club through email, website, and technical assistance as needed.
  - NNDC’s Turkey Hunt and Cabela’s annual kid’s fishing day are excellent examples of informal networking and social events that also promote the region’s assets, and they should be emulated.

- Pilot a neighborhood or town social forum website for community discussion and information. This could be done through PADD, through community newspapers, or through an established service like MindMixer or Front Porch Forum.

## Infrastructure and Transportation

**Develop and utilize infrastructure that efficiently enhances other human, social, and financial resources in the region to their maximum potential.**

### Objectives

- Develop a multi-jurisdictional brownfield mitigation project.
  - Identify partners in regional communities interested in working on a brownfield project such as the local development districts and local governance.
  - Identify sites in each community for brownfield mitigation and begin gathering information and framework necessary for grant application.
- Encourage local jurisdictions to maintain an inventory of properties and buildings that are vacant/abandoned and in need of rehabilitation.
  - Maintain an internal list at PADD that can be made available to local jurisdictions and entrepreneurs in the region.
- Promote and support programs that aid in the repurposing and rehabilitation of existing buildings, particularly in a historic districts.
- Promote and support road transportation projects that increase safety, efficiency, and economic development.
  - Continue to advocate and provide technical assistance for the Heartland Expressway Association.
  - Advocate for another segment of the Heartland Expressway to be placed on the 5-year Nebraska Department of Roads program.
- Create networks of alternative transportation in each of the four 'hub' communities.
  - PADD should offer to partner with the four 'hub' communities to develop bicycle and public transportation master plans.
  - Develop a cooperative of trips within and out of the Panhandle for deliveries, ride sharing, and product delivery from outside of the region.
  - Partner with Panhandle Resource Conservation and Development to continue to provide Western Nebraska Bicycle Club with technical and book keeping assistance.
  - Partner with Panhandle Public Health District to host and promote walking and bicycling events in the region.
- Enhance the rail transportation network through increased efficiency and full occupancy of rail spurs.
  - Identify vacant rail spurs in the region and work to complete an inventory of needs to occupy the spurs.
- Maintain a high quality system of signage throughout the Panhandle that promotes identity and ease of navigation.
  - Create an updated inventory and list of area attractions generated from a bottom-up public process.
  - Encourage communities to adopt signage systems that are useful for tourists as well as those new to town to find local services and improve way finding.
- Develop and maintain vibrant main streets in all towns.





- Pilot a ‘pop-up’ Main Street beautification project that is low cost, inspiring, and easily duplicated.
- Preserve and promote an outstanding network of public lands for outdoor, cultural, and historical use.
- Maintain soil health, water management, and land management programs that enable sustainable and prosperous agricultural activities.
- Manage community waste products to reduce environmental burden on future generations.
  - Promote and create storm water projects in all Panhandle communities, connecting communities within watersheds for collaboration.
  - Reduce volume of waste going into land fill through recycling and composting programs and equipment.
  - Support maintenance and upgrades of waste water management facilities through CDBG grants and PADD technical service.

## Human Capital: Workforce and Education

**Build a society of well-educated citizens and adequately prepared workforce to fill the needs of changing job opportunities and high skill business needs.**

### Objectives

- Create a move-in ready workforce for targeted industries with higher skilled positions.
  - Work with AIM institute, high schools, community and 4-year colleges, and other training and educational facilities to create a workforce that is aligned with the targeted industries.
  - Identify 3 priority industries and pitch to develop programs and courses that fill the needs in these industries.
- Annually graduate high ratios of high school seniors who are ready for the next stages of their career and life pursuits.
  - Encourage use and development of alternative learning options such as CHOICES in Scottsbluff Public Schools and VAULTS which increase options for students to finish high school.
  - Prepare students for responsible citizenship through community service, intergenerational opportunities
- Grow the numbers of people trained in vocational skills.
  - Create an inventory of resources for gaining vocational skills and market this inventory in High Schools, community centers, and online.
  - Encourage and promote opportunities in welding in the region.
- Create a network of schools and programs for growth of children and adults with developmental delays and other physical or mental limitations.
  - Partner with social entrepreneurship initiative to provide employment opportunities for people with developmental delays.
  - Ensure adequate promotion of resources available to populations with disabilities and developmental delays.
  - Encourage the recruitment of physical, musical, speech, and occupational therapy professionals to work in the Panhandle to increase skills and capabilities.
- Grow accessibility of early childhood education in the first five years of a child’s life.

- Partner with Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services for parenting training courses with Circle of Security.
  - Assist in finding resources for or provide technical business assistance for organizations that offer quality day care and pre-school for low-income individuals and college students.
- Create a pipeline connecting talent and skilled persons in and outside of the region to job opportunities in a manner that has clarity, depth, and breadth.
  - Develop a regional program for employers and entrepreneurs to connect with students in high school and stay in touch with them if they go on to higher education.
  - Present specific careers skills needed by target industry employers to students in high schools and outline the path required to acquire those skills.
  - Develop targeted areas of the country and world which may possess a talent pool that would fit well with our targeted industries and possibly in situations that would lend them to be ready for a move.
  - Promote and encourage the Nebraska internship incentive program to in-state and nearby out-of-state higher education institutions and to homes of recent high school graduates in the winter following their graduation.
  - Provide multiple points of information for internship opportunities in the Panhandle in regional websites.
- Strengthen frameworks for collaboration among all regional educational institutions and leading regional industries.
  - Bring together existing business-education partnership programs at community colleges, colleges, and school districts to develop an avenue-regional in scope- for employers to directly influence training offerings and curriculum.
  - Identify and organize groups of geographically related school districts for collaboration between district leaders, also involving teachers, to share information and discuss common problems.
  - Utilize business-education partnership as a platform to involve Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services, other civic organizations, arts communities, entrepreneurs, major employers, and employers in targeted industries in the formation of educational paradigms to be taught.
  - Through the partnership, develop and adopt goals for creativity and entrepreneurial thinking in K-12 education.
  - Increase exposure of high school youth to Panhandle employers, service providers, and higher education institutions.
  - Utilize third party facilitator to encourage product driven discussion between neighboring school districts on resources and curriculum offerings.
- Invest in and promote programs that encourage employment in information and technology fields with opportunity for upward mobility.
  - Ensure the AIM Institute is included in conversations with traditional education institutions and workforce-education partnerships.
  - Involve local IT businesses in development of curriculum, training courses, and mentoring for those wishing to expand IT skills.





## Housing

### Maintain desirable and affordable housing options

#### Objectives

- Develop a housing rehabilitation program that can be duplicated in several Panhandle jurisdictions.
  - Utilize PADD's loan fund and community seed money for piloting a purchase, rehab, resale model in one of the smaller Panhandle communities.
  - Pursue housing rehabilitation programs that target homes at risk for falling to disrepair under elderly occupants.
- Develop a model to attract and retain contractors for home rehab and new construction in the Panhandle.
  - Develop green and sustainable standards for rehab projects to attract out of area contractors.
  - Collaborate with housing authorities, municipality leaders, leading employers and contractors to develop a pilot program for attracting and housing contractors for rehabilitation projects.
- Maintain quality properties and encourage a code of standards enforcement for owner occupied and rental units in each community.
  - Enforce nuisance ordinances in regional communities by utilizing PADD as a third party code enforcement officer.
  - Develop rental standards and means of enforcement for unit maintenance upkeep by landlords.
- Develop private-public partnerships to create and maintain community housing policies to be less dependent on non-profits and development districts.
  - Form partnerships with community large employers to develop housing policies and projects that do not use grant funding.

## Service Efficiency

### Provide efficient and high quality government and social services.

#### Objectives

- Through PADD, student work, and local technology consultants, ensure that every community has an easily navigable, updated, and highly resourceful website.
  - Pilot a community website update project using existing UNL-Extension program, high school or college students willing carry out the update, and a community in need of a website update.
  - Target 3 county or community website updates to be completed in the next five years.
  - Conclude a pilot program with training for a local resident to continue website maintenance.
- Establish a 'one-stop shop' website with shared inter-jurisdictional information and valuable statistics.

- Utilize Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human services website as a data clearinghouse for social and health statistics to be openly accessed by anyone.
  - Utilize PADD website as a comprehensive hub of demographic and economic information and resources.
- Establish a means for digital and in person inter-jurisdictional communication
  - Create forum space for online topic based collaboration between community leaders.
  - Establish quarterly or semi-annual workshops for ideas on a particular shared problem or opportunity.
- Maintain a coalition of creative partnerships to address common problems throughout the Panhandle.
  - Continue to build off of the Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services and Western Nebraska Development Network to involve more of the 'non-usual suspects' for joint collaboration on common problems.
  - Support coalitions of people on similar plains of local governance and other areas such as health and education.
- Asset map governmental and social services on a regional basis and develop objective, product driven criteria to assess the adequacy of service.
  - Work with existing collaborative organizations, previous and ongoing studies, and emerging coalitions to complete an inventory and survey of current services.
  - Develop a model procedure and protocol to be emulated in matters of joint collaborations and overlapping services.
  - Create resident experts in sub-regions who can serve as third party spreaders of information and facilitators of conversation.
- Promote educational network for social entrepreneurship to sustain social services in the region.
  - Develop a common organization for management of book keeping operations for program oriented social service organizations.
  - Continue to sustain energy and interest in social entrepreneurship in planning initiatives, through courses, through consulting, and within economic development circles.





## Priority Strategies (Plan of Action)

Red text=highest priority

- Create an asset map for each industry, outlining the capabilities, needs, and connections of businesses in the cluster.
  - PADD will partner with the economic development organizations (TCD, BBDC, NNDC, Cities of Kimball and Sidney) to identify all businesses in two primary industries.
  - Create a survey to assess business' capacity, gaps, and network connections.
  - Aggregate data from surveys and disseminate information to respondents and the public.
- Prepare policy, human groups, and infrastructure to be poised for action for energy opportunities.
  - Work with counties which have wind energy potential to establish guidelines for zoning, roads, and environmental impact issues for big and small wind development.
  - Encourage new or existing groups in counties with wind potential to become resident experts on wind energy and to pursue commercial wind opportunities.
  - Continue to advocate for the Heartland Expressway, to provide 4 lane divided highway access through the Panhandle to facilitate increased truck traffic in the development of turbines and fossil fuel extraction.
- Pursue **agricultural** innovation opportunities through emphasis and investment in research and discovery, integration of technology, and connection of regional students to private employers.
  - Connect college and university research projects in local and other regional institutions of higher education to current agriculture operations and encourage more research projects in the Panhandle.
- Expand **Transportation and Logistics** businesses by seeking out opportunities for niche services and linking transportation and logistics businesses with other thriving industries in the Panhandle and surrounding region's industries in the Front Range and South Dakota.
  - Research the potential in Scottsbluff-Gering becoming a Foreign Trade Zone or Subzone for as a transportation, manufacturing, and distribution.
  - Collectively seek out the technological improvements in communication and efficiency to position our region's transportation and logistics to be more competitive.
  - From the capacity and gaps survey of each industry, identify which other industries have gaps in transportation and logistics that could be met by businesses in the Panhandle.
- Strive to build depth in **Advanced Manufacturing** and work with leading businesses to seek out the best market gaps and opportunities on a global scale.
  - Build depth within specific product niches to offer the best product, through technology, talent, process, and reach.
  - Provide avenues of financing and channeling research and development into new products that can be produced in the region. Linkages between research and university institutions, talent, and industry leaders will be critical for product development, innovations, and technical assistance.
- Expand global and national scope of target industries and businesses within target clusters.
  - Prioritize expansion of businesses aiming to expand to global markets, with the recognition that the best opportunity may not be the easiest or safest.

- Create and provide a ‘package’ of local and regional resources and contacts for new businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Grow social entrepreneurship for sustainable social services and creative businesses with a social purpose.
  - Continue to support workshops for social entrepreneurship with Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services.
  - Plan and help host a regional conference on social entrepreneurship.
  - Develop and offer courses through PADD on business planning for organizations and businesses with a social purpose.
  - Maintain a site of resources on the PADD website for business planning, articles of interest, success stories, and resources for contact.
- Increase opportunities and networks for entrepreneurship education through traditional and non-traditional education settings.
  - Create networks for collaboration and information sharing among new and experience entrepreneurs, focusing on opportunity driven problem solving rather than linear problem solving.
  - Enhance entrepreneurship and problem solving education to K-12 students in experiences, coursework, and mentorship.
- Develop a multi-jurisdictional brownfield mitigation project.
  - Identify partners in regional communities interested in working on a brownfield project such as the local development districts and local governance.
  - Identify sites in each community for brownfield mitigation and begin gathering information and framework necessary for grant application.
- Promote and support road transportation projects that increase safety, efficiency, and economic development.
  - Continue to advocate and provide technical assistance for the Heartland Expressway Association.
  - Advocate for another segment of the Heartland Expressway to be placed on the 5-year Nebraska Department of Roads program.
- Create networks of alternative transportation in each of the four ‘hub’ communities.
  - PADD should offer to partner with the four ‘hub’ communities to develop bicycle and public transportation master plans.
- Enhance the rail transportation network through increased efficiency and full occupancy of rail spurs.
  - Identify vacant rail spurs in the region and work to complete an inventory of needs to occupy the spurs.
- Manage community waste products to reduce environmental burden on future generations.
  - Promote and create storm water projects in all Panhandle communities, connecting communities within watersheds for collaboration.
  - Reduce volume of waste going into land fill through recycling and composting programs and equipment.
  - Support maintenance and upgrades of waste water management facilities through CDBG grants and PADD technical service.
- Maintain vibrant main streets in all towns.
  - Pilot a ‘pop-up’ Main Street beautification project that is low cost, inspiring, and easily duplicated.





- Preserve and promote an outstanding network of public lands for outdoor, cultural, and historical use.
- Create a pipeline connecting talent and skilled persons in and outside of the region to job opportunities in a manner that has clarity, depth, and breadth.
  - Develop a regional program for employers and entrepreneurs to connect with students in high school and stay in touch with them if they go on to higher education.
  - Present specific careers skills needed by target industry employers to students in high schools and outline the path required to acquire those skills.
- Create a move-in ready workforce for targeted industries with higher skilled positions.
  - Work with AIM institute, high schools, community and 4-year colleges, and other training and educational facilities to create a workforce that is aligned with the targeted industries.
- Strengthen frameworks for collaboration among all regional educational institutions and leading regional industries.
  - Bring together existing business-education partnership programs at community colleges, colleges, and school districts to develop an avenue-regional in scope- for employers to directly influence training offerings and curriculum.
  - Through the partnership, develop and adopt goals for creativity and entrepreneurial thinking in K-12 education.
  - Utilize third party facilitator to encourage product driven discussion between neighboring school districts on resources and curriculum offerings.
- Develop a housing rehabilitation program that can be duplicated in several Panhandle jurisdictions.
  - Utilize PADD's loan fund and community seed money for piloting a purchase, rehab, resale model in one of the smaller Panhandle communities.
- Maintain quality properties and encourage a code of standards enforcement for owner occupied and rental units in each community.
  - Enforce nuisance ordinances in regional communities by utilizing PADD as a third party code enforcement officer.
  - Develop rental standards and means of enforcement for unit maintenance upkeep by landlords.
- Develop private-public partnerships to create and maintain community housing policies to be less dependent on non-profits and development districts.
  - Form partnerships with community large employers to develop housing policies and projects that do not use grant funding.
- Through PADD, student work, and local technology consultants, ensure that every community has an easily navigable, updated, and highly resourceful website.
  - Pilot a community website update project using existing UNL-Extension program, high school or college students willing carry out the update, and a community in need of a website update.
- Establish a 'one-stop shop' website with shared inter-jurisdictional information and valuable statistics.
  - Utilize PADD website as a comprehensive hub of demographic and economic information and resources.
- Establish a means for digital and in person inter-jurisdictional communication
  - Create forum space for online topic based collaboration between community leaders.

- Asset map governmental and social services on a regional basis and develop objective, product driven criteria to assess the adequacy of service.
  - Work with existing collaborative organizations, previous and ongoing studies, and emerging coalitions to complete an inventory and survey of current services.



Table 15: High priority projects, programs, and activities

Activity/Program/Project	Lead	Resources	Jobs
Create an asset map for each industry, outlining the capabilities, needs, and connections of businesses in the cluster.	PADD	EDA, TCD, BBDC, NNDC, City Economic Developers, Chambers of Commerce	0
Pursue agricultural innovation opportunities through emphasis and investment in research and discovery, integration of technology, and connection of regional students to private employers.	UNL-Extension, WNCC, CSC		TBD
Connect college and university research projects in local and other regional institutions of higher education to current agriculture operations and encourage more research projects in the Panhandle.	Colleges and Universities		0
From the capacity and gaps survey of each industry, identify which other industries have gaps in transportation and logistics that could be met by businesses in the Panhandle.	PADD	Chambers of Commerce,	0
Provide avenues of financing and channeling research and development into new advanced manufacturing products that can be produced in the region	PADD		TBD
Expand global and national scope of target industries and businesses within target clusters.	Local Economic Dev. Organizations	PADD, Nebraska DED,	TBD
Create and provide a 'package' of local and regional resources and contacts for new businesses and entrepreneurs.	PADD	Local government officials, Econ Dev. Officials, REAP, NBDC	0
Grow social entrepreneurship for sustainable social services and creative businesses with a social purpose.	PADD, PPHHS	United Way, NDOL, Local Non-profits	0
Create networks for collaboration and information sharing among new and experienced entrepreneurs, focusing on opportunity driven problem solving rather than linear problem solving.	PADD	WNDN, PPHHS, local econ dev. Officials, Colleges, NBDC	0
Develop a multi-jurisdictional brownfield mitigation project.	TCD, PADD		TBD
Continue to advocate and provide technical assistance for the Heartland Expressway Association.	HEA, PADD	Ports-to-Plains, NDOR, HEA member organizations	0
Advocate for another segment of the Heartland Expressway to be placed on the 5-year Nebraska Department of Roads program.	HEA	Ports-to-Plains, NDOR, HEA member organizations	0
PADD should offer to partner with the four 'hub' communities to develop bicycle and public transportation master plans.	Local City Officials	PADD, WNBC, RC&D, PPHD, PPHHS, USDA, Reconnecting America, CTA	0
Reduce volume of waste going into land fill through recycling and composting programs and equipment.	Panhandle RC&D	Local government officials, solid waste businesses	TBD
Promote and create storm water projects in all Panhandle communities, connecting communities within watersheds for collaboration.	Panhandle RC&D	local public works officials,	0
Support maintenance and upgrades of waste water management facilities through CDBG grants and PADD technical service.	PADD	Nebraska DED,	0
Preserve and promote an outstanding network of public lands for outdoor, cultural, and historical use.	Neb. Game and Parks, PADD	PRBE, RC&D,	TBD

<b>Activity/Program/Project</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Jobs</b>
Develop a regional program for employers and entrepreneurs to connect with students in high school and stay in touch with them if they go on to higher education.	New Partnership, PADD	NBDC, Rural Futures Institute, USDA,	0
Work with AIM institute, high schools, community and 4-year colleges, and other training and educational facilities to create a workforce that is aligned with the targeted industries.		AIM, Local School Districts, ESU-13, WNCC, CSC, NDOL, EDA	0
Bring together existing business-education partnership programs at community colleges, colleges, and school districts to develop an avenue-regional in scope-for employers to directly influence training offerings and curriculum.	PADD		0
Through the business-education partnership, develop and adopt goals for creativity and entrepreneurial thinking in K-12 education.	New Partnership, PPHS		0
Utilize third party facilitator to encourage product driven discussion between neighboring school districts on resources and curriculum offerings.	PPHS, PADD		0
Utilize PADD's loan fund and community seed money for piloting a purchase, rehab, resale model in one of the smaller Panhandle communities.	PADD		TBD
Develop private-public partnerships to create and maintain community housing policies to be less dependent on non-profits and development districts.	Area employers, Local Officials		TBD
Through PADD, student work, and local technology consultants, ensure that every community has an easily navigable, updated, and highly resourceful website.	PADD	Local schools, local tech businesses, UNL-Panhandle Extension,	TBD
Utilize PADD website as a comprehensive hub of demographic and economic information and resources.	PADD	Staff time	0
Create forum space for online topic based collaboration between community leaders.	PADD	Tech and website development businesses, local media, WNDN, local municipalities	0
Asset map governmental and social services on a regional basis and develop objective, product driven criteria to assess the adequacy of service	Scottsbluff Community Connection		TBD
Research the potential in Scottsbluff-Gering becoming a Foreign Trade Zone or Subzone for as a transportation, manufacturing, and distribution.	PADD	TCD, Enforcement and Compliance	TBD

## Performance Measures

The following performance measures are used to evaluate the successful development and implementation of this strategy.

- Number of jobs created after implementation of the CEDS
- Number and types of investments undertaken in the region
- Number of jobs retained in the region
- Amount of private sector investment in the region after implementation of the CEDS
- Changes in the economic environment of the region

In addition to the above performance measures, the following will also evaluate performance:

### **Workforce and Education**

Higher enrollment in area vocational training programs

Adopted creative and entrepreneurial benchmarks in area schools

### **Infrastructure and Transportation**

More projects scheduled on the NDOR five year program book

Streetscaping and Revitalization plans completed or implemented in area communities

More occupied rail spurs in Panhandle counties

### **Housing**

Occupied units of purchase, rehab, resale homes

Number of rehabbed homes

Number of housing building permits

Adoption of rental standards in area communities

### **Entrepreneurship and Business Development**

Numbers of internships utilized in the state program

Number of new business plans created and carried out

# Disaster and Economic Recovery

## Current Resources

**Community Emergency Response Team (CERT):** CERT is a program promoting community preparedness by training citizens and private and government employees to be ready in the event of an emergency. Kimball County, Region 21, and Scottsbluff are the Panhandle communities which maintain a CERT program.

**Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA):** Safety and security of agriculture is a high priority to NDA and is important to the economic and physical well-being of the state. Some activities include Livestock Emergency Disease Response System (LEDERS), advocating for emergency response planning in agriculture, planning response to contagious animal disease emergencies, and working to mitigate human implications of food and dairy product emergencies and their effect on humans.

**Nebraska Medical Reserve Corps:** The NMRC program provides structure to deploy medical and public health personnel in response to an emergency, as it identifies specific, trained, credentialed personnel available and ready to respond to emergencies. The Panhandle Medical Reserve Corps program is located in Bridgeport and is led by Melody Leisy. [mleisy@pphd.org](mailto:mleisy@pphd.org)

**Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP):** These plans are completed in the Panhandle by the Natural Resource Districts and thus are multi-jurisdictional in scope. These plans outline steps and actions to take to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from a hazardous event. The plans are developed with extensive cooperation of local officials in government, roads, and public works. These plans qualify the regions for Hazard Mitigation assistance from FEMA in the form of grants and programs.

**Regional Emergency Management Agencies:** Three Emergency Management agencies are maintained in the Panhandle of Nebraska, Regions 21, 22, and 23. Each emergency management organization is directed by a council comprising of representatives from member communities. The Regions have a coordinator who is employed by the joint council, maintains an Emergency Operating Center, and supports in emergency preparedness, recovery, and resiliency. The council and coordinators advise and support the local and county emergency management coordinators.

### *Region 21*

Counties: Kimball, Morrill, Cheyenne, Garden, Deuel  
Coordinator: Ronald D. Leal, [region21em@region21.net](mailto:region21em@region21.net)

### *Region 22*

Counties: Scotts Bluff, Banner  
Director: Jerry Bretthauer, [jbrett@scottsbluff.org](mailto:jbrett@scottsbluff.org)

### *Region 23*

Counties: Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan  
Coordinator: Nan Gould, [reg23ema@bbc.net](mailto:reg23ema@bbc.net)

**Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA):** The NEMA is charged by state statute to reduce the vulnerabilities of the people and communities of Nebraska from the damage, injury and loss of life and property resulting from natural, technological, or man-made disasters and emergencies. The



agency has 40 full-time and part-time employees, and its operations focus on preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Assistance and services for planning, grants, trainings, organization of volunteers and hazard mitigation are provided by the agency.

**Nebraska Continuity of Government Plan (COG):** The COG plan establishes the policies, plans, guidelines, and procedures that will allow for the preservation, maintenance, or reconstitution of the state government's ability to carry out its responsibilities under all circumstances that may disrupt normal governmental operation.

**State Emergency Operations Plan:** The state level cousin to the LEOPs, the SEOP establishes policies, plans, guidelines, and procedures that allow all emergency resources to function effectively in the state. This document is prepared and maintained by NEMA.

**Local Emergency Operations Plans (LEOP):** Each county is required to form and adopt a Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP). The plans outline 12 primary functional areas of responsibility that define the tasks that must be accomplished to ensure public safety and welfare in the event of an emergency. Each LEOP addresses primarily the local authority though state agency responsibilities and capacities are considered.

Responsibilities and activities are addressed in the following functional areas:

1. Direction and Control
2. Communications and Warning
3. Damage Assessment
4. Emergency Public Information
5. Evacuation
6. Fire Services
7. Health and Medical
8. Law Enforcement
9. Mass Care
10. Protective Shelter
11. Public Works/Utilities
12. Resource Management

Counties in each Emergency Management Region have agreements for mutual aid should one of the cooperating counties experience a major emergency or disaster.

Plans outline four phases of emergency management:

1. Mitigation
2. Preparedness
3. Response
4. Recovery: Short and Long term

## Phase I: Pre-Disaster Preparedness

### Pre-disaster recovery and mitigation planning

The LEOP which is individualized and adopted by each county, outlines ways to be prepared before a disaster strikes for response and recovery. Hazards are identified in the state Hazard Mitigation Plan ahead of time to recognize where greatest threats lie to reduce loss of life, injuries, economic costs, and destruction of natural and cultural resources. More locally, the local regional Natural Resource Districts complete Hazard Mitigation Plans for their areas which include the North Platte NRD, the South Platte NRD, and the Upper Niobrara White Natural Resources District. Be Ready Nebraska is an initiative that offers information and assistance for emergency planning. Planning guidance is available for regular citizens, including senior citizens, businesses, schools, and healthcare facilities to be ready for disasters and emergencies.

### Risks and Vulnerabilities

The LEOP hazards assessment and the state and Regional HMPs outline some of the key risks and vulnerabilities in the Panhandle. Some key vulnerabilities, which are pervasive in the Panhandle, include weather related events such as severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, high winds, drought, and severe winter storms. The threat of wildfire is also a risk but is more pronounced in the Pine Ridge in Region 23 Emergency Management Area, and a wildfire plan has been developed for that area and is being emulated in the Wildcat Hills. Locally, flooding is an issue in the banks and valleys of the South and North Platte Rivers, as well as north near the Niobrara and White Rivers. Other risks to consider include landslides, terrorist attacks, and hazardous spills.

### Business Continuity Planning

Preparation for unforeseen emergencies or events is critical for recovery for businesses. The best resource for Business Continuity planning comes from PADD's partner South Central Economic Development District (SCEDD) in Nebraska. This resource is called NE Biz Recovery and provides tools, presentations, and guides for business recovery planning to be prepared for emergencies. Data and resource collections, contact identification, equipment gathering, communication planning, and property protection are all important steps in the continuity planning process and are outlined in the resources link for NE Biz Recovery. Be Ready Nebraska, the state emergency planning initiative, also provides resources for business planning for unexpected emergencies.

### Resources for limited mobility, special needs, and elderly

All steps of response, shelter, evacuation, and recovery include plans to take care of those with limited mobility and special needs. These guidelines can be found in Annex E of the LEOP for evacuation, Annex G for health and medical care, and Annex I with mass care. Resident volunteer organizations like medical reserves and CERT teams would know where limited mobility, special needs, and elderly neighbors are located to provide help and assistance to those individuals. Elderly people also have specific resources made available through Be Ready Nebraska to prepare for emergencies.

### Shelters

Shelters are addressed in the LEOPs in Annex J and cover events that range from tornadoes to hazardous material spills to radioactive fallout. Emergency management coordinators are responsible for identifying appropriate shelters and establishing protective shelter procedures. All schools, health care facilities, and major industries have tornado plans. Air circulation system directions and instructions will





be given to private homes and institutional facilities for indoor protection in the event of a hazardous material incident. Mass Care plans are also outlined in Annex I of the LEOPs.

**Recovery Partners, type of assistance and resources they can provide. Develop an interagency action plan.**

Responsibilities of agencies like law enforcement and the Red Cross are outlined in the LEOPs. Vital services, basic needs of the public, damage assessment, and emergency response are all coordinated across multiple agencies. Housing, food, and restoration of non-vital services and reconstruction are also addressed in the plans adopted by the local Emergency Management organizations and are addressed in the LEOPs in respective Annexes. These plans are multi-agency in nature and include:

Debris Removal, Habitability Inspections, Repair and Restoration of Essential Utilities, Repair and Restoration of Public Facilities, Decontamination of HazMat Spill Site, Assistance to Individuals and Businesses,

**Identify what recovery activities will take place immediately, short-term, intermediate, and long-term**

Recovery activities are outlined several places, including the county LEOP, Regional Emergency Management Plans, and in the greater NEMA procedures. Activities from Debris Removal to Habitability Inspections, to Restoration of facilities to Assistance to Individuals and Businesses and the parties responsible for carrying those activities out are all outlined in the LEOP.

**Develop and disseminate a community evacuation plan**

Evacuation plans are outlined by each county's LEOP. Evacuation plans are developed on a county level as well as for each community are created in response to hazards such as flood plains identified through the LEOP Hazard Analysis. Transportation is coordinated by the Region Emergency Management Coordinator and mass care of evacuees will be managed by the American Red Cross.

**Establish a communication plan**

Warning and alert systems are in place through such entities as the National Weather Service, local media stations, and law enforcement. Annex B in county LEOPs includes Emergency Management Warning Procedures and includes a notification chain to media, government, emergency services, and non-governmental organizations (such as schools, hospitals, and senior centers). Alliance, NE and other jurisdictions have utilized "CodeRED Warnings" to disseminate information and alerts to residents. More of these mobile app warning systems should be encouraged. Annex D in the LEOP also outlines the chain and methods for information dissemination in the event of a disaster.

**Engage the community to communicate the process and protocols to follow in the event of a disaster and what recovery efforts will be undertaken**

Local CERTs and medical reserve corps are organizations through which ordinary citizens are engaged and informed on the recovery and response processes. Trainings and seminars are on-going through NEMA and other outlets to inform and train citizens on what will occur in the event of an emergency. BeReadyNebraska.gov is another resource that's goal is to help members of the public prepare and plan for emergencies.

## Phase II: Post-Disaster Planning and Implementation

### Disaster Assessment

Disaster assessments are addressed in Annex C of the county LEOP and are broken down into Public, Private and Agriculture under the direction of the Emergency Management Coordinator. Included in the Public activities are transportation, public utilities, and public works. The LEOP outlines the procedure for incident assessment and the need for good record keeping.

The Damage Assistance Taskforce of Nebraska (DATNE) is a service established by the state of Nebraska which consists of building inspectors, architects, and structural engineers that can be deployed to estimate damages. The assessments recorded and provided to the emergency manager ensure appropriate support from the state and federal government is requested.

### Develop and/or Implement Recovery Timeline

The timeline and responsibilities for recovery actions are outlined in the LEOP Annexes C and K. These activities include in the more immediate debris removal (Annexes C and K), taking days weeks and months, and Habitability Inspections (Annex K) in the following weeks and months, but also the longer term actions of Restoration of Utilities (Annex K) for weeks and months, and assistance to individuals and businesses (Annex G) which can last for months and years after an event.

It is assumed through the Emergency Management Agencies and LEOP that the local government and response personnel will be responsible for immediate needs of a community or area following a disaster or emergency. Depending on the type and extent of the emergency, additional resources and parties will be activated as described in the LEOP and agreed upon by the Emergency Management Area boards. Incident Status Reports are completed with NEMA to determine the extent of the emergency and the extent of services and assistance needed.

Resources (federal, state, local, and private sector) needed for each activity are identified in the LEOP and in other plans in the area and outline when and who would be contacted for assistance. City and village resources, county resources, Emergency Management Resources, the Red Cross, state resources through NEMA and federal resources are all accounted for and deployed accordingly as the situation is understood and assessed.

Once the scope of a disaster and emergency is understood and the area experiencing an emergency has been stabilized, local organizations, including the broad inclusion of the community, in partnership with state and federal emergency planning agencies (NEMA and FEMA) will set goals for recovery to plan for where the community wants to be post-disaster at certain points in time.

### Implement Recovery Plan (long-term recovery)

Business, economic, and entrepreneurial rebuild initiatives and workforce initiatives, as have been addressed above, include SCEDD's NE Biz Recovery, Be Ready Nebraska, and resources from state (NEMA) and federal (Department of Homeland Security and FEMA) agencies.

Other resources available to the community for businesses to rebuild and entrepreneurial resources to reignite include the same resources that are currently available in planning and financing through the economic development districts and local economic development organizations.

Federal funding programs available as outlined, in the NRDs' HMP, for Hazard Mitigation grants, flood mitigation assistance, pre-disaster mitigation, repetitive flood claim program, severe repetitive loss



program, and others. Event recovery funds are available federally through FEMA for individual assistance (housing, loans, counseling, unemployment, property, etc.) and public assistance, which typically pay for 75 percent of approved project costs. Public assistance programs may include debris removal, protective measures, repair of damaged public property, loans for government functions, and grants for public schools.

It is outlined that local governments and organizations will have funds for immediate response and recovery actions.

## Appendix A: Community Leaders Survey



### Help us plan for our future.

In order to ensure a great quality of life, the Panhandle must develop a shared vision for the future. Your responses to this survey will help set in motion the process to create an economic strategy for the future of the Panhandle.

Please take a few minutes to share with us your values, priorities, and what you think are promising possibilities for your community and the region.





## 1. Demographics

- a. Town/county of residence \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Please check age group  
☐ 21 to 25    ☐ 26 to 49    ☐ 50 to 65    ☐ 65+
- c. Please check **all** the statements that apply to you.
- |                                                                                |                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> An elected town, county or state official             | <input type="checkbox"/> Farmer or agribusiness owner                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appointed or elected to serve on a government board   | <input type="checkbox"/> Business owner (non-agricultural)                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Officer or committee member of a non-profit           | <input type="checkbox"/> Retired person                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental or service organization or club         | <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployed                                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee of town, county, state or federal government | <input type="checkbox"/> Current or former PADD/RC&D member                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee of educational institution or student        | <input type="checkbox"/> Have children/grandchildren that live in the area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employee (non-government)                             |                                                                            |

## 2. Community Characteristics That Affect The Quality of Life

- A. Please rate the following characteristics by circling from 'LOW' to 'HIGH' according to the priority you would place on these characteristics in a desirable community. Circle '0' if you have no opinion or no knowledge.

#	Characteristic	Priority of characteristic			No Opinion
1	Beautiful and healthy environment.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
2	Recreation opportunities.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
3	Ease of mobility within my community.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
4	Friendly neighborhoods.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
5	Presence of other families with children.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
6	Well maintained buildings and properties.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
7	Housing availability.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
8	High availability of amenities.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
9	Professional job opportunities.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
10	Agricultural life style.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
11	Cultural community activities.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
12	Vibrant public spaces and parks.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
13	Quality public education.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
14	Other (please specify )	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0

- B. Of the features listed above, which two are you **most** satisfied with in their current condition? (Please write the number (#) from section A in the given boxes).

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------

- C. Of the features listed above, which two are you the **least** satisfied with in their current condition?

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
----------------------	----------------------



### 3. Problems and Concerns

#### A. What are major problems and concerns that affect the quality of life in your community?

Rate the importance of the problems from 'NOT' if the issue is not a problem to 'MAJOR' if the issue is a major problem. Circle '0' if you have no opinion or don't know.

Problem	Degree of Problem				No Opinion
	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	
Lack of entrepreneurial support.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of business opportunities.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of cooperation within my community.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Poor management of natural resources.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Inefficient use of financial resources.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of access to jobs and job resources.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of skilled workforce.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Available employment is low paying.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of low cost housing.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of quality of housing.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of attractive public spaces and parks.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Poor/mediocre quality of education in public schools.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Youth leaving the area.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
<b>Degree of Problem</b>					
Crime in areas of my community.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Inadequate recreational opportunities.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of accessibility to desired amenities.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Quality or lack of public facilities (Pools, library, etc....)	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Difficult/costly mobility within the region.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Difficult mobility within my community.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Water quality.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Threat of fire or flooding.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Conflict between residential and agricultural land use...	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Poor emergency response times.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of services for the elderly.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Lack of available information about my community.....	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Other (Please specify)	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0
Other (Please specify)	NOT	LOW	MEDIUM	MAJOR	0

**Thank you for identifying what the most important problems are.**

*Now, please help us identify what some of the promising solutions are to these problems.*







## 4. Possible Solutions

Please rate each of the following possible Solutions according to how great of a potential positive impact it could have on the quality of life in your community and the region.

Solution	Potential positive impact			No Opinion
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	
Improvement of local roads.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Improvement in regional transportation.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increased cycling and recreation paths.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
More upper-middle class housing.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase quality of low-cost housing.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Home re-hab loan programs.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Revitalize public spaces.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Organization of people with similar interests.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Development of Neighborhood Associations.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Organized downtown revitalization effort.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Develop retail/wholesale farmers market.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase volunteer opportunities.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
	Potential positive impact			
Expand skill training and life learning opportunities	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Grow an innovation network (Seminars, resources, etc.)	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Grow the available work force.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase availability of online community information	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase retirement homes & related services.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Attract new commercial business.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Greater support for entrepreneurs.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Develop 'risk taking' business culture.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase retail business.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Develop new industries.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase manufacturing.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Marketing improvement for tourism.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Create more job opportunities.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase wages.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0

Solutions continued on next page>>>>

#### 4. Possible Solutions - continued

Solution	Potential positive impact			No Opinion
	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	
More opportunities for public political participation.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
More attention to low-income areas of the community	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase availability for child-care/after school programs..	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Improve services for elderly and disadvantaged.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Stronger land-use and zoning regulations.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Increase production of alternative crops.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Improvements in agriculture marketing.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Value added ag product development.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0
Pursue wind and other renewable energy.....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	0

**Thank you!**

*Almost done! Just answer these few closing questions:*

1. What do you go outside your community most for?

Outside community name: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of trip: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name a 'stand-out' strength of your community:

3. Name a strength of a neighboring community:

Community name: \_\_\_\_\_

Strength: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Name a strength of the Panhandle region:

5. Name something the Panhandle could do better as a region:

Your input is greatly appreciated. The results of this survey will be made public at a later date and will provide input for the 2013 Community Economic Development Strategy for our area. Please return this survey in the provided, pre-stamped envelope to PADD. We appreciate your commitment and look forward to working together to build a bright future.





## **Panhandle Wide Community Leader Survey Results: 27 responses**

**Priorities:** 1) Beautiful Environment 2) Quality Public Education 3) Friendly Neighborhoods, 4) Recreation Opportunities 5) Well Maintained buildings and properties

### **Problems top 12:**

Youth leaving area,  
Lack of quality housing,  
Lack of skilled workforce,  
Low paying employment,  
Lack of access to jobs and job resources,  
Lack of business opportunities,  
Lack of cooperation within my community,  
Lack of recreation opportunities,  
Lack of entrepreneurial support,  
Lack of low cost housing,  
Lack of services for the elderly,  
Crime,  
Inefficient use of financial services

### **Problems Bottom 5:**

Water quality,  
Conflict between residential and ag land use,  
Threat of fire/flooding,  
Poor emergency response times,  
Lack of available info about my community

### **Solution top 12:**

Attract new commercial business,  
Develop new industries,  
Increase wages,  
Create more job opportunities,  
Increase retail business,  
Increase manufacturing,  
Marketing improvement for tourism,  
Expand skill training and life learning opportunities,  
Pursue wind and renewable energy,  
Grow the available work force,  
Home rehab loan,  
Increased cycling and recreation paths

### **Solutions Bottom 5:**

More opportunities for public participation,  
Stronger land-use and zoning,  
Neighborhood associations,  
Increase production of alternative crops,  
Increase volunteer opportunities

# Appendix B: Public Meeting Notes

## Alliance Meeting Notes November 13, 2013

Attendance: 11

Chelsie Herian, Russ Furich, Amanda Loomis, Judy Amoo, Kim Engel, Mark Anderson, Pat Runkle, Karen Runkle, Kevin Howard, JD Cox, Debby Feller, Chuck Karpf, Daniel Bennett (facilitator)

### Focus Areas

Housing  
Trades professions  
Enhanced Tourism  
Youth  
Assets  
Workforce  
Education  
Healthcare

### Mindsets

Thinking of the Panhandle as a unified community  
Being unapologetic for our area; positive and enthusiastic  
Sustainable development: marathon not a sprint  
Shared pride  
Shine theory: I don't shine if you don't shine  
What's good for one is good for all  
Creating our own entertainment  
Fostering Tolerance and Diversity  
Success is getting up one more time than you fall down

### Specific creative Ideas

Linkubator—Connecting people to ideas, increasing the frequency of the 'spark'  
Hobby/interest fair  
Outdoor outfitter for rental equipment, packages, trip ideas  
Region-wide website developer business  
Gardening and greenhouses  
Underground Alliance  
Ghost town tours  
Embrace and promote unique and quirky assets  
Coordinate and promote festivals on a regional scale  
Information available in one place- High plains compass  
Golf Tour- (Tentative title: Teed Off)  
Internship summer surge  
Alternative transportation



### **Workforce**

Things to grow:

- Competitive wages
- Grow our own mentality and initiative for needs and businesses
- Internships
- “The training academy”
- Skilled laborers
- Work ethic

### **Housing**

Gaps/opportunities:

- Developers
- Money
- Assess need
- Find ‘risk takers’
- Overcome cost
- Cheaper land/lots
- Community partners
- Second story apartments
- Tradespeople to work on housing

### **Education**

- Dual credit program
- Creating a skilled workforce
- Good schools is an asset
- WNCC pres./CSC
- RHOP
- College of Nursing

### **Location**

- Stop undervaluing our resources
- Clean air
- Rural lifestyle
- Friendly
- Airport
- Transportation
- Agriculture
- Moving close to family (help) (young families)
- Recreational Opportunities

### **Food systems**

- Take advantage of sunshine
- Fill need for more locally grown organic produce
- Farm to schools partnerships
- Greenhouses potential
- Being the ‘best fed plains state’
- Connect agriculture and food growing to education and tourism

## Chadron Meeting Notes December 10, 2013

### Part I

#### Focus Areas:

- 1) Education in community about the plans
  - Who it affects
  - What does it cover
- 2) Education connection and opportunity awareness to the outside world
- 3) Infrastructure of technology needs to be upgraded
- 4) Improve and Enhance tourism opportunities
- 5) Tourist Infrastructure
  - Increase our amenity offerings
  - Restaurants
  - Hotels
  - Signage
- 6) Industry
  - Utilize existing resources
  - Federal/State lands such as:
    - o Wind generation
    - o Utilize home business “shop at home”
- 7) Roads/Infrastructure
- 8) Tax Efficiency, policies to promote growth
- 9) Roads plan/ prioritization of transportation investments
- 10) Healthy Living
- 11) Energy Industries (Shale, Wind, Solar)
- 12) Heartland Expressway
- 13) Value Added Agriculture
- 14) Inter-government communication
- 15) On-going collaboration
- 16) Connecting business and local workforce
- 17) Promoting and improving livability

#### Mind Sets:

- Can do attitude- thinking outside the box, embrace opportunity
- Dispelling Apathy-
  - o Engagement of community (Ask, don't assume apathy)
  - o Cheerleading- reinforce good behavior
- Shine Mindset: I don't shine if you don't shine
- Neighbors helping neighbors
- Taking initiative and community pride
- Being positive about our assets and what's happening in our community
- Being unapologetic about our home



What can we do to make the panhandle a smarter, happier, and more competitive place to live and do business?

Smarter:

- Greater communication with state government
- Efficiency with tax money
- Collaboratives
- DELTA

Happier:

- Build pride in our community, especially in lesser developed areas
- Healthy living promotion county wide (region wide too)

Competitive:

- Build up infrastructure
- Road improvements
- IT skills and jobs

## Part II

Chosen Industry: Tourism

Natural Assets:

Forest, grassland, hunting, fishing, hiking, atv/biking opportunities, camping, fort Rob, Chadron State Park, Fur Trade Museum, Black Hills, Geological- Toadstool, Bird watching, equestrian, cross country skiing

Growing

- 1) ATV, Motorcycle trails  
Winter: skiing, hunting, prairie dogs, coyote, mountain lion, antelope
- 2) Grow amenities, Develop tax increment financing and other tax break incentives
- 3) Summer- Rattlesnake Roundup, bird watching, equestrian, Janet's Dude Ranches, Festival of locally grown brewed and distilled beverages and products: steaks, beef, pig n pit.  
Tie in with Crazy Horse ride

Industry

Other assets: Railroad, uranium, state parks

Grow:

Job opportunities

- 1) Microbrewery
- 2) Wind Industry
- 3) Dude ranch, Infrastructure
- 4) Promote shop @home including homebased cottage industry markets

- 5) Add tax to internet shopping, origin fee

#### Infrastructure

- 1) Plan for a comprehensive road plan, park equipment in yards, to better grade and maintain roads, less time with blades off the road, prioritization plan
- 2) Useable broadband access by every household, business, government agency, etc.

#### Assets:

Wind, solar, hunting, fishing, historical, museum, recreational ranches, post graduate education, workforce supported by college, uranium, people communicate and help each other, oil shale close by, good work ethic and good ideas





## Sidney Meeting Notes November 20, 2013

**Attendance:** Linda Roelle, Jo Caskey, Tim Lindahl, Pat Maher, Gary Person, Wilson Bowling, Karen Kollars, Wendall Gaston, Paula Abbott, Mike Leining, Cheryl Jones, Geralyn Konruff, Eric Parsons, BJ Willinson, Wanda Brogren, Emily Haakenson, Bob Olsen, Megan McGown, Connie Hancock, Glenna Phelps-Aurich, Jeff Kelly, Daniel Bennett (facilitator)

**Focus areas:**

Tourism, Housing, History, Social, Higher education, Work Force Development, Vocational Workforce development, Encourage entrepreneurship, partnering with Communities, Connecting People, Cultural Opportunities, Education (K-6), Retail Shopping, Creative Healthcare, Aesthetics,

**Mindsets:** Foster a reused rather than a disposable “tear down” philosophy, Perception of Rural America is damaging to growing vibrant rural communities, develop regional pride

**Connecting People:**

Assets:

High Plains Compass, Adv. Broadband, Regional Development Organizations

Gaps:

Not aware of all the organizations and resources, don’t share resources, getting connected, don’t utilize all the resources and connections

Grow:

We have regular meetings but getting all the players at the table is a challenge, territorial mindset is a barrier, Some people go to the meetings but don’t show up with thoughts/ideas- Engage more people, empower people to be leaders, our leaders need to teach people to teach

Partnerships:

-Central committee/position: PADD

-Build on Events

-Newspapers, radio, etc. / other websites to promote each other.

-Welcome wagon to actually visit new people not just receive a packet (cause anxiety?)

-Weekly email from different businesses to give soft message to newcomers

-PADD as an umbrella organization to gather and put out info from regional groups, regional groups gain info from chambers and civic organizations

**-Education:**

New HS, Elementary School, Desire for K-6 education, involve comm. College in ongoing workplace training, and new employees, People with skills in technical trades leave and may not come back.

### **-Retail Shopping-**

Develop local, don't get overlooked by franchises, find a way to plug into new opportunities, change hours to create a vibrant scene, be more open when people can shop

New Hospital-Satellite Doctors: Creative health care,

-WNCC small business classes (or classes by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs), certificate in entrepreneurship

-Business and skill mentoring, spread mentoring opportunities and knowledge

-Community investments focused

-Getting on-line

-\$50/ 3 businesses

-Sheridan, WY Downtown as an example

### **-Cultural**

-Museum and tourism

-History-Boothill Outlook

-Igloos-north of Sidney

-Ways to get young people excited

### **-Hospital**

Grow our own professionals, nurturing an employee from the start, Roots to lay down

### **-General Assets**

Growth is an opportunity for education, health, business entrepreneurship

-Young= Education opportunities

-Middle Age = Family draw

- Older People = retirement draw

Cottage industries = develop retail industry

Housing

Plan to grow housing 800 homes in 3-5 years: Land secured, utility hubs, \$160,000-\$700k, One apartment complex, potential downsizing for older adults, -Space: Room for growth is an asset

Bike path- developed area will have connectivity to new area (connect with other towns along HWY 30?)

Downtown- "Small town romance", sell the quaint aesthetics, making retail more enticing,

New HS, new elem., WNCC, gap: No 4 year college

Good test scores, generally pleased with education, low dropout rate,

Recreation: Golf course, tracks, community center

Chamber: Strong, active -7 affiliates for keep America beautiful

-Clean community, park, memorial gardens, sports

-Soccer complex

-Open to new people, Cabela's, different ethnicities

-Increasing population

-Town doubles in size M-F

-Commute



- Tourism**-POW camp, WNTC, Museum hours aren't capitalized, better marketing, Regional Pride
- Housing**-critical issue: availability, diversity of selection
- Social**: activities and social aspect for young people, enhancing entrances to communities,
- Higher education and Workforce Development**: Better access/use of WNCC, access while in high school (40+ miles from a campus) ,

#### -Develop workforce in Tech fields

- HVAC, Contractors/Construction, Electricians, Mechanics

Imported workforce changes the dynamics of a community

### Workforce

#### Assets:

Number of opportunities for a wide range of careers, enhanced vision

#### Opportunities:

Vocational training thru WNCC

### Housing

#### Assets:

Community partner investing in housing (or anything else, someone with a vision and someone who has money that can benefit from it, finding who wants to benefit off of someone else's passion) , existing housing stock to use

#### Opportunity:

Senior, rentals---townhomes, upper quality rentals, Diversity of selection and price

#### Barriers:

Funding for infrastructure, manpower (vocation jobs), Trades People, Availability

### Social

#### Assets:

Adult leagues, Rec Center, Active, Civic Minded people, Growing Younger Generation

#### Opportunities:

Young Professional group

new or expanded rec. opportunities

-Swimming pool, tennis courts, trail system

-Retail and Restaurants, etc. (Pop-up, trial opportunities?)

Increased Digital Presence

Increase vocational training, getting more interested in vocational jobs and attracting quality vocation staff

Entrepreneurship partnering with communities

-Connecting students from school and colleges to business i.e (SIFE: Students in Free Enterprise

-Social events that encourage people to stay for the weekend -OR- create a group from within the town that goes for the weekend, so they're going with each other and bring that capital back after the weekend

Internship programs

## Gering-Scottsbluff Meeting Notes November 12, 2013

Attendance: Pat Comfort, Matt Larsen, Mike Minzey, Lois Herbel, Al Herbel, Russ Rinch, Jennifer Rogers, Kim Engel, Brent Holliday, Jared Ross, Alan Doll, Karen Anderson, Marla Marx, Mike Meister, Michelle Boydston, Peg Deines, Maurie Deines, Joran Colwell, Angela Kembel, Rick Willis, Carolyn Nading, Eli Aguilar, Rawnda Pierce, Janie Scanlan, Jan Fitts, Chuck Karpf, Daniel Bennett (facilitator)

### Over-arching Themes:

Shine Theory: I don't shine if you don't shine  
What's good for one community is a benefit for all communities in our region  
Solutions will come from growing what we have  
On-going regional collaboration is very important  
Embrace differences and new ideas

## Education

### Assets:

Favorable teacher to student ratio  
Preschools within schools- SB, Hemingford  
Variety of Christian school options  
Head Start, Early Head Start, Healthy Families America, Home visitation program  
Awareness of the challenges we face  
Sign language teaching

### Things to grow:

Regionally coordinated alternative education (VALTS, etc.)  
Distance learning  
Relevance in curriculum  
Service learning  
Job shadowing  
Adapting regulations to allow apprenticeships in a field of choice  
Facilities  
Dual Credit Opportunities  
Focus on first 3 years  
Healthy lifestyle teaching  
More options of learning for different career paths  
Homeschooling groups  
Grow the family centered focus-educating parents too  
MOPS- educating parents  
Support network for young parents

## Continuing Education

### Assets:

Eastern Wyoming College  
Chadron State College (CSC)





Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC)  
CAPWN Health Center- training program  
Training Academies- Cabela's, PPHHS, Regional West  
Nursing School  
University of Nebraska- Extension  
Partnerships with Bellevue University, ESU, CSC

**Things to grow:**

Offer internships and scholarships  
Training for tradesmen  
Courses in sustainability  
Service learning, job shadowing  
Community issue + school curriculum + community partner  
IT skill learning  
Distance learning  
Web-based entrepreneurship education  
Connections to community and businesses

## Other Opportunities

Tourism signage, route legibility  
Grow strengths of history  
Medical tourism  
Bicycles, trails  
Heartland Expressway funding  
Alternative Transportation  
Business recruitment for region rather than specific towns  
Creative worker recruitment  
Recruit workers not doctors  
Business succession planning  
Business incubation  
Shortage of tradesmen  
Local Grocery systems- Small communities suffer  
Availability of organic/local food  
WiFi Connectivity  
Web Presence for businesses and communities  
Medical facilities looking/thinking outside the box  
Information about our area to new comers  
Sustainability in decision making (Social, environmental, & fiscal)  
Use vacant/dilapidated available infrastructure  
Landfill- waste to energy  
Edible landscape  
More avenues for artistic expression  
Cross generational collaboration  
Cross cultural opportunities  
Utilize NEXT, young people more fully  
Use retired people for experience, time, and knowledge

# November/December Community Meetings Summary

Locations: Alliance, Chadron, Gering-Scottsbluff, Sidney

Total Attendance: 73 people

## Summary:

The objective of this first round of meetings was to gain some direction on where to focus our attention for sustainable regional growth. Some areas in which it was identified we could work regionally were:

- Tourism
- Technology skill building
- Roads/Infrastructure
- Leadership development
- Communication 'ladder' from local to regional and back to local
- Housing: development, community partners, rental standards, regional goals
- Vocational Training and development
- Connecting: people to ideas, schools to businesses, intergenerational
- Education: alternative, experiential, on-going, vocational skill, distance learning, college
- Creative worker recruitment
- Food/Grocery systems
- Increase web presence, technological updating on regional
- Entrepreneur network/mentoring/seminars/on-going learning
- Industry analysis, leveraging our growing businesses and industries
- Innovative/value added agriculture
- On-going collaboration of businesses and regional organizations

The most talked about topics were workforce development, education, tourism, connections and communication, housing, infrastructure (tech, building, and roads) and skill building. When coupled with industry and business analysis, we get a fairly comprehensive view of our economy.

Basically there are market opportunities, a workforce to take advantage of market opportunities, education and skills to build the workforce, and infrastructure to facilitate residents' needs and economic opportunities. Within these areas were more specific opportunities where we could take action locally. However, this process is focused primarily on growing wealth and filling the gaps of economic development region wide, so any local actions will need to be part of a broader regional action or strategy.

**Moving forward**, we will dive into the areas and opportunities identified to focus our efforts on specific actions and investments- a task that will require making some choices. The framework on the following page outlines the general timeframe, key themes that will run throughout the process, and the areas of action where we will focus our investments.





## *CEDS Framework Moving Forward*

### **Key Themes:**

Shine Theory: I don't shine if you don't shine  
Sustainability: Social, Financial, Environmental  
Benefit in one community = benefit in all our communities  
Collaborating to Compete  
Asset Based Development  
Innovation: Creating new ideas with what we have  
Healthy communities

### **Areas of Action**

- Industry Growth (Macro Level)*
- Business Growth (Micro Level)*
- Infrastructure*
- Education*
- Skill Training*
- Housing*