

SOUTH CENTRAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC.

**COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
10/1/2021—9/30/2026**

www.scedd.us



Table of Contents		2
Executive Summary		3
Priority Area 1—Industry Growth & Innovation	4	
Priority Area 2—Workforce Development	4	
Priority Area 3—Housing Development	4	
Priority Area 4—Community Development	4	
Background		5
Introduction of the Region	5	
Natural Resources	6	
<i>Groundwater</i>	<i>6</i>	
<i>Surface Water</i>	<i>8</i>	
<i>Soil & Farmland</i>	<i>9</i>	
Infrastructure	10	
<i>Transportation</i>	<i>10</i>	
<i>Energy</i>	<i>10</i>	
<i>Wind</i>	<i>11</i>	
<i>Solar</i>	<i>11</i>	
<i>Broadband</i>	<i>12</i>	
<i>Higher Education</i>	<i>13</i>	
<i>Health Care</i>	<i>14</i>	
Human Capital & Labor Force Characteristics	15	
<i>Population & Human Capital</i>	<i>15</i>	
<i>Labor Force Characteristics</i>	<i>18</i>	
Industry Cluster and Emerging & Weakening Industries	20	
<i>Industry Clusters</i>	<i>20</i>	
<i>Emerging & Weakening Industries</i>	<i>21</i>	
<i>Industry Analysis Summary</i>	<i>24</i>	
<i>Workforce & Workforce Related Issues</i>	<i>23</i>	
SWOT Analysis		26
Economic Resilience		28
Strategic Direction, Action Plan & Evaluation Framework		33
Strategic Direction	33	
Evaluation Framework	33	
Action Plan	34	
Acknowledgements		39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The South Central Economic Development District, Inc. (SCEDD) region is comprised of thirteen primarily rural counties in south central Nebraska including Adams, Buffalo, Clay, Franklin, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Howard, Kearney, Merrick, Nuckolls, Phelps, and Webster.

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a locally based, regionally driven economic development planning process and document. Regions must update their CEDS at least every five years to qualify for U.S. Economic Development Administration assistance. Based on regulations, the CEDS must include:

1. A Summary Background of the economic conditions of the region.
2. An in-depth analysis of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
3. A strategic direction and action plan that builds on the analysis findings.
4. An evaluation framework for SCEDD's implementation of the CEDS and its impact on the regional economy.
5. A discussion regarding the region's economic resilience, or its ability to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shifts, natural disasters, the impacts of climate change, and now includes the unforeseen international pandemic COVID-19.

Public engagement is a critical part of the CEDS process and it must be broad-based and inclusive.

The SCEDD's CEDS Strategy Committee developed this CEDS report using a process that involved data analyses and broad-based public input, including the following sectors: agriculture, economic development, education, health care, manufacturing, and municipality. Key findings of the economic conditions of the region are:

- The SCEDD region is characterized by strong agricultural natural resources including ground and surface water supplies, a developed water management and distribution system, and fertile soils. This combination supports the strong agricultural sector within the region.
- The SCEDD region generally offers strong transportation infrastructure that is well developed for agricultural and manufacturing exports. The technological resources are unevenly distributed throughout the region and while institutions of higher education are present, following the statewide trend of declining enrollments, regional enrollment has also declined over the last 10 years.
- Although there is some population growth in the SCEDD region, the region has more people age 65 or older than the rest of Nebraska. Like the statewide trend, there is evidence that the SCEDD region is experiencing an inflow of less educated people and an outflow of more educated people. As a result, workforce and workforce-related issues exist and are affecting the economic performance of the region.
- The labor composition of the SCEDD region is heavier/more concentrated in the industries of agriculture and manufacturing when compared to Nebraska. Other trends for the region include lower wages and slower employment growth. It appears the region is moving toward a less dynamic, lower education, slower growth and lower wage work force when compared to Nebraska in general.
- The industry analysis shows the core industries within the region are Agriculture , Manufacturing, Public Administration and Educational Services. One point of concern is the weakening of service industries within the region such as Wholesale Trade, Construction, Health Care & Social Assistance and Retail Trade.

- Finding qualified workers remains a significant challenge within the SCEDD region. The general trend is a shortage of qualified workers and applicants for job openings in nearly every skill level, industry, and occupation. Recruiting nurses and skilled manufacturing workers in the region remains a significant challenge. Rural counties are reporting that a significant challenge in recruiting and retaining workers is the availability and quality of housing stock. New housing is largely concentrated in higher populated areas and the quality of housing is declining on average in rural counties.

These key findings and the public input process allowed the 2021 CEDS Strategy Committee to conduct a regional SWOT analysis, and to develop vision and mission statements and goals, objectives, action items, and performance measures to support continuous improvement in the region. The strategic goals of the plan are summarized below.

PRIORITY AREA #1: Industry Growth & Innovation

The goal is to grow, sustain, and integrate efforts related to diversifying the regional economy, particularly in the agriculture-manufacturing wholesale trade industry cluster. Cluster industries in the region are tightly connected to the natural and infrastructure resources. Specifically, the soils, water and transportation corridors play a critical role in the Agriculture, Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade industries. These core industries are maintaining a level of advantage within the region however there is also a need to invest in maintaining supporting industries to help retain and recruit workers.

PRIORITY AREA #2: Workforce Development

The goal is to attract, develop, and retain a skilled, competitive, and entrepreneurial workforce that meets the needs of the regional business community, particularly in the agriculture, manufacturing, and health care industries. The challenges for workforce in the region include greater employment growth for lower skill workers when compared to higher skill workers and the very low unemployment that remains a constraint to growth.

PRIORITY AREA #3: Housing Development

The goal is to increase the quality and quantity of housing opportunities in the region. Enhancing and encouraging increased housing options will be important to economic development and to recruiting and retaining workers and their families within the region.

PRIORITY AREA #4: Community Development

The goal is to mobilize communities to flourish and assist them in their endeavors to increase quality of life measures including broadband expansion, healthcare access, alternative energy development, childcare availability, transportation, as well as infrastructure improvements of streets, facilities, trails, parks, downtown revitalization and more.

Introduction of the Region

The South Central Economic Development District (SCEDD) is comprised of thirteen, primarily rural, counties including Adams, Buffalo, Clay, Franklin, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Howard, Kearney, Merrick, Nuckolls, Phelps, and Webster. The region covers 7,600 square miles (approximately 10% of Nebraska area) in south central Nebraska with a total population of 207,768 persons (10.9% of Nebraskans).

SCEDD has 86 incorporated cities and towns within its thirteen county region. The three largest cities are Grand Island (51,187), Kearney (33,273), and Hastings (24,922), known as the Tri-Cities. Each is the principal city of their respective Metro or Micropolitan Statistical Area, which collectively comprise eight of the thirteen counties in the region (Grand Island Metropolitan Statistical Area includes Hall, Hamilton, Howard, and Merrick; Kearney Micropolitan Statistical Area includes Buffalo and Kearney; and Hastings Micropolitan Statistical Area includes Adams and Clay). The next cohort of cities range in population from more than 2,400 but less than 6,000 and include Holdrege (5,476), Aurora (4,481), Minden (2,890), and Central City (2,893). The remaining communities have populations of less than 2,400.

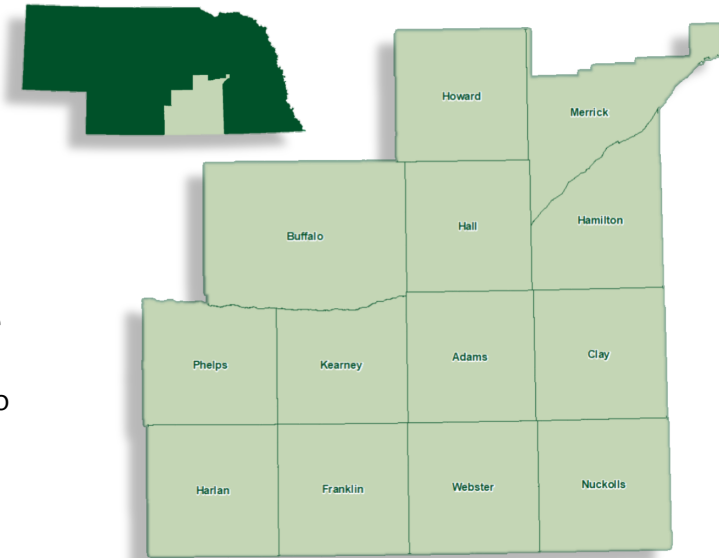
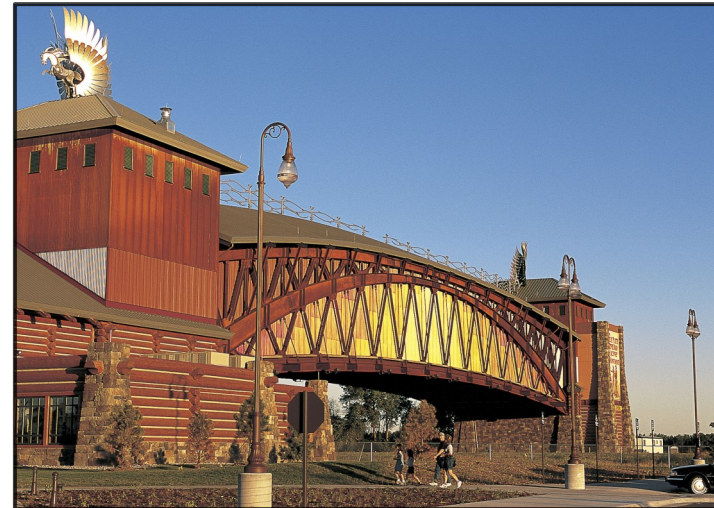


Figure 1: Map of SCEDD Region

Photo 1



Photo 2



Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5 year data estimates <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/>

Figure 1: South Central Economic Development District, Inc - Map of the District

Photo 1: Photographed by Diane Murphey, June 2018, Wilcox, NE

Photo 2: Photographed by Nebraska Tourism, Great Plains River Archway

Natural Resources

Groundwater

Groundwater from the Ogallala Aquifer, one of the world’s largest aquifers, is a valuable natural resource for the region. Approximately 99% of residents rely on groundwater as their source of drinking water, and the agriculture industry uses vast amounts of groundwater to irrigate crops and sustain livestock. Of all active registered water wells in Nebraska as of November 2020, 51.8% and 11.9% were used for irrigation and livestock purposes, respectively; see Table 1. Figure 2 shows the concentration of active wells in the state.



Photo 3

Figure 2: Active Registered Water Wells in the State as of November 2020

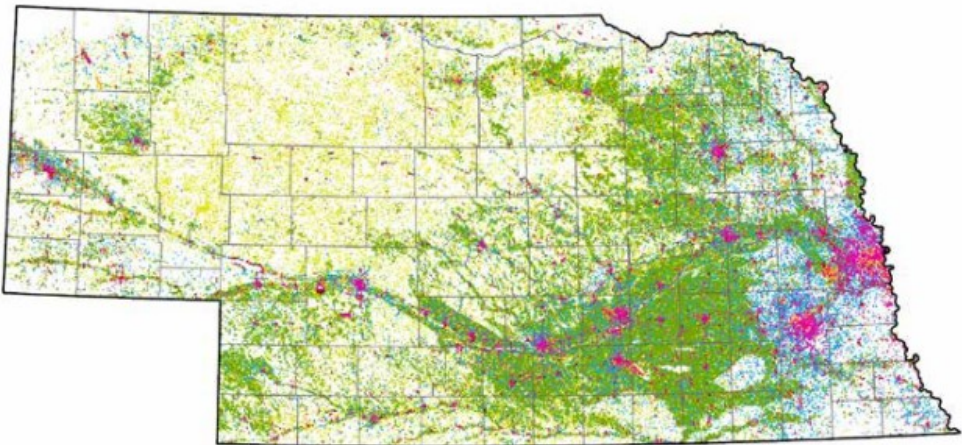


Table 1: Active Registered Water Wells and Use as of November 2020

	Water Use	Active
●	Irrigation	96,263
●	Domestic	32,332
●	Livestock	22,656
●	Monitoring (groundwater quality)	16,457
●	Public Water Supply	3,035
●	Commercial/Industrial	1,802
●	Other	14,194
	TOTAL	186,739

Sources:
 Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, 2020 Nebraska Groundwater Quality Monitoring Report, available at: http://deq.ne.gov/Publica.nsf/Pubs_GW.xsp
 Figure 2 & Table 1: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources Registered Well Database, 2020
 Photo 3: Photographed by Diane Murphey, June 2018

Groundwater (Continued)

The depth to the groundwater in the region varies from a few feet to 200 feet. The more shallow the groundwater the cheaper it is to drill, construct, and pump water from the wells; however, the groundwater is also more at-risk from impacts of human activities. A wide variety of compounds (>240) are monitored across Nebraska and only 12 compounds sampled exceed the reporting limit, with the top compound being nitrate-nitrogen. Counties in the region with exceptionally high levels of nitrate-nitrogen concentration (>10mg/l) are Buffalo, Hall, Hamilton, Kearney, Merrick, Nuckolls, and Phelps counties; see Figure 3. There are also:

- Fifteen Public Water Systems in the region that must perform quarterly sampling for nitrate; see Figure 4.
- Three Public Water Systems in the region with Administrative Orders that mandate system changes so that nitrate results are consistently below the maximum contaminant level; see Figure 4.
- One Public Water System in the region that is treating water because of high levels of nitrate; see Figure 4.

Related to nitrate leaching is uranium concentrations in groundwater. There are two Public Water Systems in the region that are treating water because of high levels of uranium; see Figure 5.

Most Recent Nitrate-N Concentration by Township

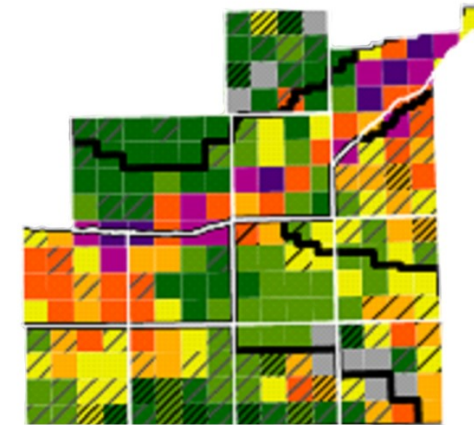
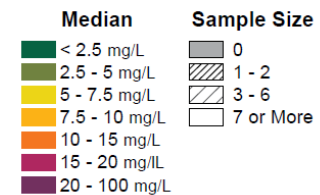


Figure 3



[Nebraska DEE](#) saved in DATA, page 18

Community Public Water Supply Systems with Requirements for Nitrate

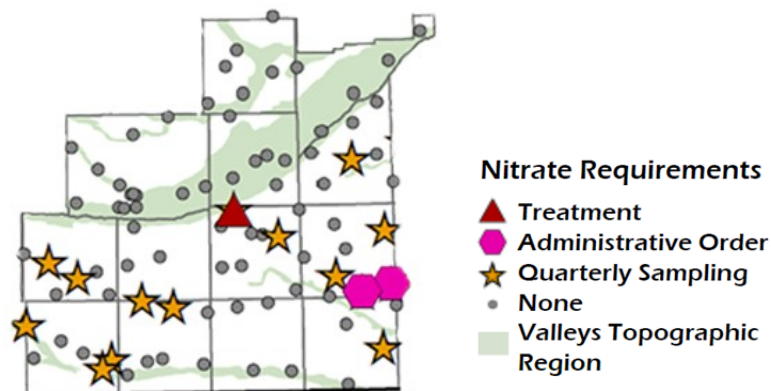


Figure 4

Community Public Water Supply Systems with Requirements for Uranium

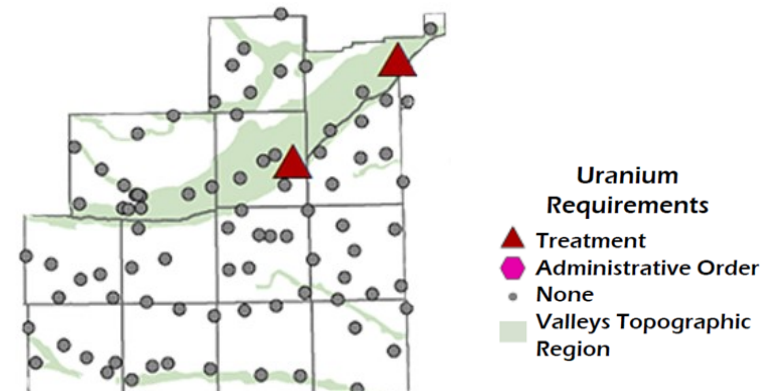


Figure 5

Sources:

Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy, Groundwater Quality Monitoring Report, available at: <http://dee.ne.gov/publica.nsf/PubsForm.xsp?documentId=C3C47F71DBDA83338625863100728C51&action=openDocument>

Figure 3: Median of the most recent Nitrate-N concentration by township of 18,299 wells from 1999-2018.

Figure 4: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources Registered Well Database, November, 2020

Figure 5: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources Registered Well Database, November, 2019

Surface Water

Nebraska has 13 major river basins including 1,558 designated stream segments and 539 lakes/impounded water. The Middle Platte River Basin and the Republican River Basin primarily cover the SCEDD region. Within these basins are two important bodies of water, the Platte River and Harlan County Reservoir. The Platte River is a valuable natural resource as its water irrigates crops, fills reservoirs, sustains livestock, recharges the groundwater, and provides habitat for fish and wildlife species. The specific stretch of the Platte River valley from Kearney to Grand Island is particularly important for the region as each spring thousands of migratory birds (e.g., Sandhill Cranes and Whooping Cranes) stop to rest and refuel in the valley before flying further north to breeding grounds. The economic impact of crane watchers during the migration for regional organizations devoted to crane preservation, education, and watching, is estimated to be \$14.30 million.¹



Photo 4

Harlan County Reservoir is Nebraska's second largest lake with 13,250 acres of water surface, and is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project. Initially, the dam and reservoir were built for flood control; however, it now provides water for irrigation, recreation use, fishing, hunting, and wildlife watching. During the summer, water is released to irrigate thousands of acres in Nebraska and Kansas. For recreational purposes, there are 542 camping pads available at 7 established campgrounds around the lake's 75 miles of shoreline. During the winter months, hundreds of Bald Eagles stop at the lake during their annual migration, and American White Pelicans can be viewed at the lake during their spring migration.

Overall, water quality index values for the Middle Platte River Basin and the Republican River Basin indicate the water quality of the basins is "good."



Photo 5

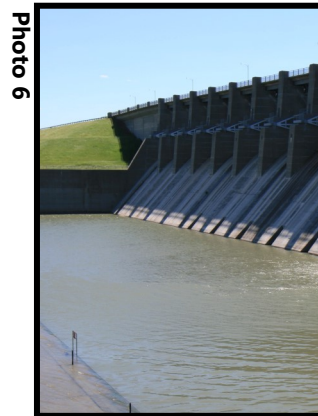


Photo 6



Photo 7

Sources

Nebraska Department of Environmental and Energy, 2018 Water Quality Integrated Report, available at: <http://deq.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/TMDL> and the Nebraska Wildlife Federation website, available at: <http://www.nebraskawildlife.org/public-policy/rivers-wetlands/>

¹Dority, et al. (2017). The Economic Impact of the Annual Crane Migration on Central Nebraska. University of Nebraska at Kearney and Lincoln, available at <http://unknews.unk.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Crane-Economic-Impact-Study.pdf>

Photo 4 & 5 Photographs by Nebraska Tourism; Sandhills Crane Migration and Harlan County Reservoir

Photo 6 & 7: Photographs by Diane Murphey, June 2018; Harland County Dam and Harlan County Reservoir Fishing Tournament

Soil & Farmland

Nearly 4.9 million acres of land make up the SCEDD region, and more than 250 different soils have been identified in the region, with the two most prevalent being Holdrege silt loam and Hastings silt loam. The Holdrege and Hastings soil series consist of very deep, well drained, and moderately permeable soils that are vital to agriculture. They are classified as Class 1 or 2 for land capability, which indicates the soils have slight to moderate limitations that restrict their use or that require moderate conservation practices. Also, both have a “moderately high inherent productivity” ranking for the National Commodity Crop Productivity Index. This indicates that the soils have features that are generally quite favorable for crop production, and good yields and moderately low risk of crop failure can be expected. In terms of soil health, bulk density is one of several soil properties used as a measure of soil health and is an indicator for soil compaction and root restriction. Both the Holdrege and Hastings silt loams have ideal bulk densities for plant growth (approximately 1.40 g/cm³).

Overall, nearly 60% of the SCEDD acres are classified as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance by the USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service. Prime farmland has an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or from irrigation that is of adequate quality, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods, and it either is not frequently flooded during the growing season or is protected from flooding. Slope ranges mainly from 0 to 6 percent. The prime farmland is essential to support the region’s industry and farmers have been taking steps to improve the health of the soil by engaging in practices such as no-till production and cover cropping.

In summary, the SCEDD region is characterized by strong agricultural natural resources including ground and surface water supplies, a developed water management and distribution system and fertile soils. This combination supports the strong agricultural sector within the region.

Sources:

USDA, 2020 Web Soil Survey, available at: <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>

Photo 8: Photographs by Nebraska Tourism

Photo 9 & 10: Photographs by Diane Murphey, June 2018; Webster County & Phelps County

Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



Infrastructure

Transportation

SCEDD has extensive highway and rail infrastructure allowing ease of access to markets. There are more than 1,200 miles of State Highway, US Highway, and Interstate infrastructure, with Interstate 80, the longest Interstate highway in Nebraska, running through three of the SCEDD counties; see Figure 6. Also, approximately 785 miles of rail lines connect the region to the rest of the operational North American Railroad Network, with Union Pacific or Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads running through ten of the thirteen SCEDD counties.

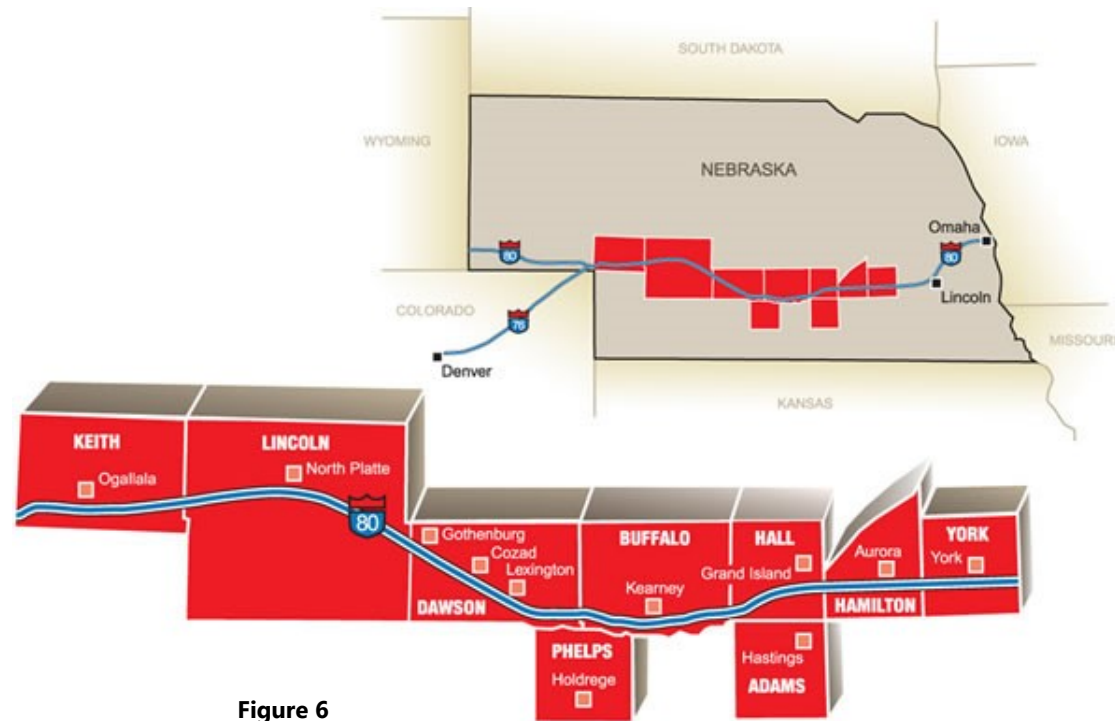


Figure 6

Energy

Nebraska is the only state where every residence and business receives electric service from publicly owned utilities, such as municipal utilities, electric cooperatives, or public power districts. Nebraska has the third-highest number of industrial electricity customers of any state, and a significant share of Nebraska's industrial consumption is seasonal demand from farms where electricity is used to run irrigation systems. Nebraska is among the top 10 states in per capita total energy consumption in part because of its energy-intensive industrial sector, led by agriculture and food processing, and because of Nebraska's hot summers and harsh winters.

Nebraska produces about 14% of the nation's fuel ethanol and ranks second in the nation, after Iowa, in ethanol production and capacity. In 2018, Nebraska obtained 64.7% of its in-state electricity net generation from coal, 13.4% from wind, and 15.6% from nuclear power. Almost all of the rest was generated from natural gas (2.6%) and hydropower (3.3%). In Nebraska, households can choose an alternative retail supplier for Natural Gas through the Black Hills Choice Gas Program which gives consumers the option to compare multiple plans and rates.

Sources:

Figure 6: <https://www.i80nebraska.com>

Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy 2020 Annual State energy report; page 29: <http://dee.ne.gov/publica.nsf/PubsForm.xsp?documentId=34437FBD421B63EE8625867E00584DCF&action=openDocument>

Energy (Continued)

Wind Energy

Nebraska has the sixteenth largest installed wind capacity in the country. At the end of 2020, Nebraska had the installed capacity of 2,531 megawatts of wind energy, which is 2.07% of the nation's installed capacity of 122,465 megawatts.

Within the SCEDD region, there are wind farms in Adams County and Webster County. The Hastings Wind Farm in Adams County has one turbine with maximum capacity of 1.7 megawatts. The Cottonwood Wind Farm, seen in Photo 11, located three miles south of the City of Blue Hill in Webster County has fifty-two turbines in commercial operation with maximum capacity of 89.7 megawatts.

Currently the Franklin Wind Farm Project is under construction and expected to be operational by the end of 2021. There are also additional projects in development in Webster and Franklin Counties.

Solar Energy

Solar energy in Nebraska is on the rise. The Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) has several programs to promote Solar Energy use in Nebraska. Nebraska Dollar and Energy Saving Loans are offered statewide by the NDEE and the state's lending institutions.

Currently there are ten operational solar projects in the SCEDD region totaling 7,954.7 kw or 7.9 megawatts and there are four projects under development totaling 4,549.3 kw or 4.5 megawatts. There is also a 305,000 kw project committed in Clay County that is scheduled for completion in August, 2021. see Table 2.

Solar Energy			Table 2
Community	Operational	Committed	Under Development
Grand Island	1,000.0 kw		1,301.3 kw
Hastings	2,500.0 kw		1,500.0 kw
Kearney	5,700.0 kw		
Superior	1,000.0 kw		1,248.0 kw
Aurora	500.0 kw		
Aurora	32.0 kw		
Central City	600.0 kw		
Holdrege	100.0 kw		
Minden	21.0 kw		
Ravenna	1.7 kw		
Clay County		1,000.0 kw	305,000.0 kw
Totals	7,954.7 kw	1,000.0 kw	309,049.3 kw



Photo 11



Photo 12

Sources:

<https://neo.ne.gov/programs/loans/loans.html>

Table 2: State of Nebraska Energy Statistics <https://neo.ne.gov/programs/stats/inf/198.htm#commit>

Photo 11 Diane Murphey; Windmills in Webster County

Photo 12 Central City <https://www.nebraskansforsolar.org/solarexamples/>

Broadband

Eighty-nine percent of Nebraskans—but only 63% of rural Nebraskans—have fixed broadband of at least 25 Mbps down/3 Mbps up available, (FCC June 2018). The average fixed download speed in Nebraska increased from 34 Mbps in 2016 to 89 Mbps in 2018; however, Nebraska is 48th in the nation for broadband access, and among the slowest. Only 10.8% of Nebraskans have access to a standalone internet plan that costs under \$60 per month. Rural consumers are likely to pay more for broadband.

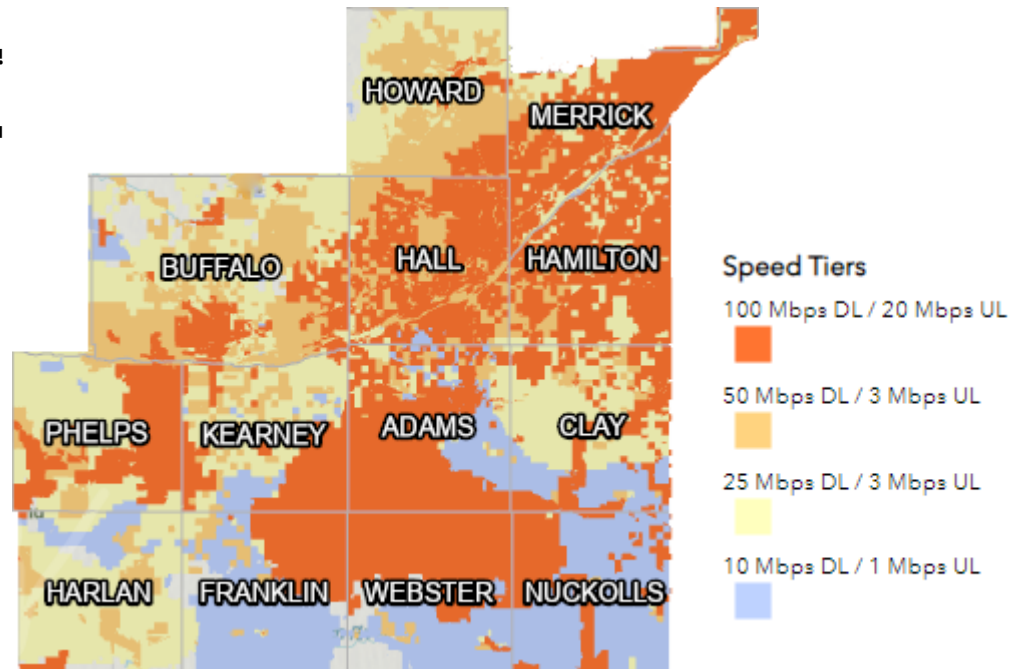
Eighty-three percent of all Nebraskans, 56% of rural Nebraskans, have access to mobile broadband. Average mobile broadband speeds in Nebraska lag behind the US average (20.8 Mbps, compared to 27.3 Mbps US). Nebraska also trails the US in broadband subscriptions to 25 Mbps or greater service.

For the SCEDD region, there is a disparity in access to quality high speed broadband services. This disparity is magnified in the most rural areas as evidenced by the southern tier of the SCEDD region. Figure 7 highlights the need for public/private partnerships and proactive pursuit of grant funding to address this disparity and improve the quality of life in this region.

Photo 13



Figure 7



Sources:

Broadband Now: <https://broadbandnow.com/Nebraska> <https://ruralbroadband.nebraska.gov/reports/2019/RBTF2019Reportfinal.pdf>

U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5 year data estimates <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/>

Photo 13: Mary Ridder

Figure 7: <https://gis.ne.gov/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=ba42a254d4f14f4783a14193c12a443e>

Higher Education

Institutions of higher education in Nebraska are categorized into five types:

- University of Nebraska
- Nebraska State College System
- Nebraska Community Colleges
- Nebraska Independent Colleges & Universities
- For-Profit/Career Schools

Within the SCEDD region, three types are present and include the University of Nebraska with a campus in Kearney (UNK), Central Community College with campuses in Grand island and Hastings and learning centers in Kearney and Holdrege (CCC), and Hastings College in Hastings. Nearly 11% of all undergraduate students enrolled in Nebraska's institutions of higher education are enrolled in these institutions within the SCEDD region. Among the three institutions, 38% of students are enrolled at UNK, 54% are enrolled at CCC, and 8% are enrolled at Hastings College.

Since 2009, undergraduate enrollment statewide in all institutions of higher education has declined by 6.3%. However, among the three colleges located in the SCEDD region, enrollment has dropped by -13.7% overall. This decline is shared by all institutions in the SCEDD region, -13.0% for CCC, -16.2% for Hastings College, and -12.0% for UNK.

SUMMARY: In summary, the SCEDD region has technological resources that are unevenly distributed throughout the region. While institutions of higher education are present, enrollment statewide and within the SCEDD region has been on the decline for the past ten years.

Percent of Students Enrolled by Institution, 2019

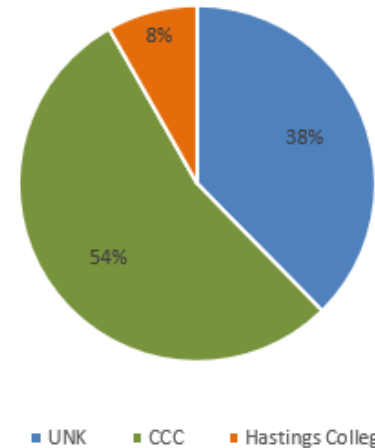


Figure 8

Hastings College, CCC, & UNK Enrollment, 2009-2019

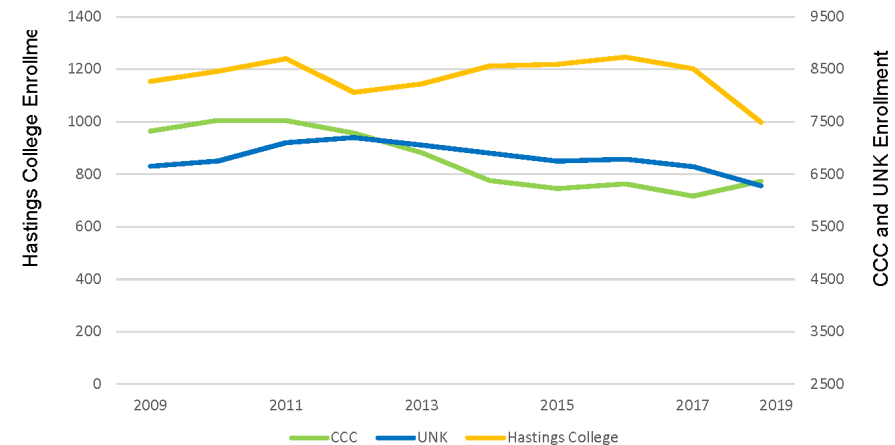


Figure 9

Sources:

Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, available at: <https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/enrollment-dashboard>

Figure 8, 9: Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, available at: <https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/enrollment-dashboard>

Health Care

The SCEDD region is home to a number of medical institutions including Acute Care Hospitals in Hastings, Kearney and Grand Island and rural Critical Access Hospitals. In addition, the Central Nebraska Veteran's Home recently moved to Kearney from Grand Island in 2019 and provides updated and expanded facilities.

Nebraska Hospital Association (NHA) members within the SCEDD Region:

- Broadstone Memorial Hospital, Superior
- CHI Health Good Samaritan, Kearney
- CHI Health St. Francis, Grand Island
- Franklin County Memorial Hospital, Franklin
- Grand Island Regional Medical Center, Grand Island
- Harlan County Health System, Alma
- Howard County Medical Center, St. Paul
- Kearney County Health Services, Minden
- Kearney Regional Medical Center, Kearney
- Mary Lanning Healthcare, Hastings
- Memorial Community Health, Aurora
- Merrick Medical Center, Central City
- Phelps Memorial Health Center, Holdrege
- Richard Young Behavioral Health, Kearney



Members of the NE Hospital Association

Figure 10

The region is also served by four Public Health Districts: The Central District Health Department in Grand Island, Loup Basin Public Health Department in Burwell, South Heartland Health Department in Hastings, and Two Rivers Public Health Department in Kearney. Public health departments coordinate and plan public health services and respond to public health emergencies and were an integral part of the recovery after the flooding in central Nebraska in the spring and summer of 2019. Public health departments have also monitored the COVID-19 pandemic, provided testing and vaccinations for citizens, and provided education and resources for the communities, businesses and schools in the area.

Since the region has a number of medical employers, the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing and the UNMC College of Health Allied Professions expanded at the University of Nebraska at Kearney campus. These programs complement the Health Sciences programs offered through Central Community College.

Sources:

Figure 10: Members of Nebraska Hospital Association Map

https://www.nebraskahospitals.org/about_us/member_hospitals.html

http://dhhs.ne.gov/CHPM%20Maps/NE_Health_Dept_Map_Dec_2016.pdf

Human Capital & Labor Force Characteristics

Population & Human Capital

There are an estimated 207,768 people living in the SCEDD region, and nearly 70% of people live in the Tri-Cities area (30% in Hall County, 24% in Buffalo County, and 15% in Adams County). Hamilton and Phelps counties have 4.5% of the SCEDD population residing in each county. Demographically, SCEDD residents look similar to Nebraska residents. Seventy-three percent of SCEDD residents were born in Nebraska while 64.8% of Nebraskans were born here. Twenty-nine percent of SCEDD households are families with children under the age of 18. Nearly 29% of SCEDD households have at least one person age 65 or older, compared to 26.5% of Nebraska households. Eight percent of SCEDD residents are veterans; the majority of veterans are men over the age of 65; and 12.8% of SCEDD residents have a disability, which is slightly higher than Nebraskans (11.5%). Eleven percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home (9% speak Spanish). Population trends in the SCEDD region include:

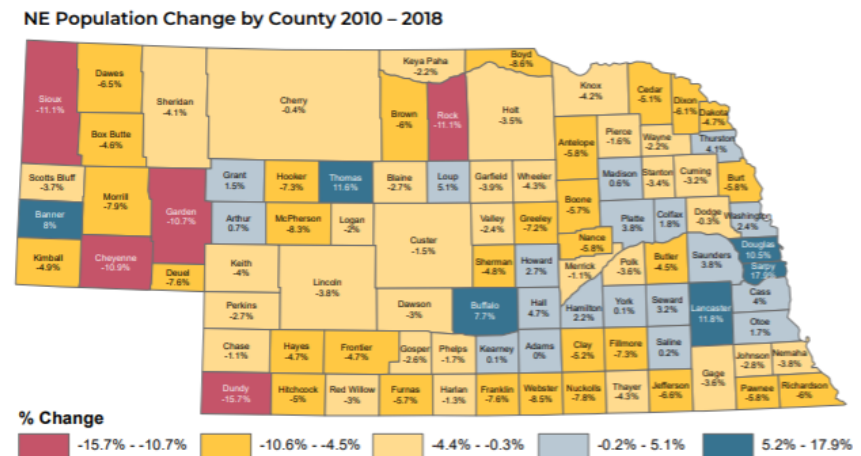
1. Positive Population Growth, but Rural Counties are Shrinking

Since 2010, the population in the SCEDD region has grown 7.0% compared to 5.9% for Nebraska and 6.3% for the U.S.; however, the growth has varied across the region. Two of the counties, which have our largest communities, experienced population growth (7.7% in Buffalo County and 4.7% in Hall County), whereas the rural counties on the southern border of the SCEDD region have experienced population declines (-7.6% in Franklin County, -1.3% in Harlan County, -7.8% in Nuckolls County, and -8.5% in Webster County). The SCEDD region follows a nationwide pattern in which rural residents are moving away from non-micropolitan counties to other micro or metropolitan counties. (Figure 11)

2. Growing Hispanic Population

SCEDD population reflects Nebraska overall with 91% of the SCEDD population identifying as white compared to 89.8% of Nebraskans. However, the Hispanic population in the SCEDD region (12.9%) is slightly higher than Nebraska (10.7%), and there has been a greater influx of Hispanics living in the SCEDD region compared to Nebraska overall (41.1% vs 33.8% growth from 2010 to 2018.)

Figure 11



Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5 year data estimates <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/>

Figure 11: Nebraska Department of Labor Economic Insight and Outlook September 2020 <https://neworks.nebraska.gov/admin/gsipub/htmlarea/uploads/Economic%20Insight%20and%20Outlook%202020.pdf>

Population & Human Capital (continued)

3. Aging Population

The age composition of Nebraskans are slightly younger, with 60.4% of residents are 45 years or younger while in the SCEDD region, 52.8% of residents are 45 or younger. Fifty seven percent of SCEDD residents are 65 years or older while only 46.4% of Nebraska residents are 65 years or older. Both the SCEDD region and Nebraska have experienced the fastest population growth among people age 65 or greater since 2010 (14.4% for SCEDD and 8.2% for Nebraska). Figure 12

In Nebraska, there has been less than one percent change in all other age groups since 2010. The SCEDD region has experienced 3.2% growth in population aged 45 to 64 years; 2.9% growth in population aged 25 to 44 years; 1.5% growth in population age 18 to 24 years of age; 2.2% growth in youth age 5-18; and .8% growth in youth under 5 years of age. Among the SCEDD population age 16 or older, 64.6% are participating in the civilian labor force. This is above the national average of 61.7%.

4. Educational Attainment

Nebraska has a high school graduation rate of 91.1% and the SCEDD region high school graduation rate is 90.1%. Among people age 25 or older, 31.3% of Nebraskans hold a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 24.9% in the SCEDD region. (Table 3). Within the SCEDD region, there is a total population of 11,603 youth between the ages of 16-19 years, of which 4.7% are not in school and not employed.

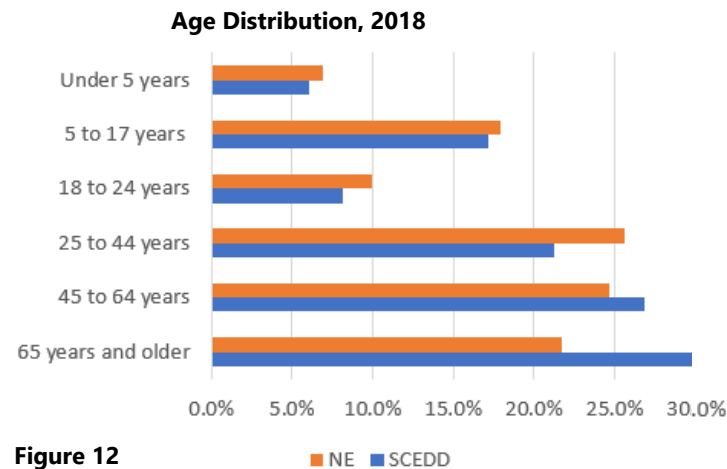


Figure 12

Educational Attainment Among those Age 25 or older, 2018

	SCEDD	NE
Less than High school graduate	9.9%	8.9%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	29.9%	26.3%
Some college, no degree	24.3%	23.0%
Associate's degree	10.9%	10.5%
Bachelor's degree	17.1%	20.8%
Graduate or professional degree	7.8%	10.5%

Table 3

Sources:
 U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5 year data estimates <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/>

Population & Human Capital (cont.)

5. Negative Net Migration

Net migration is negative for the SCEDD region indicating more people are leaving the region than are moving into the region. The primary destination for out-migration is to other Nebraska counties, particularly those in larger metropolitan areas. The top five destination counties for out-migration are: Lancaster, Douglas, York, Madison, and Sarpy. Beyond Nebraska, the top five states the SCEDD region is losing people to are: Iowa, South Dakota, Florida, Arizona, and Oklahoma. The top five states from which people move to the region are Minnesota, California, Kansas, Idaho, and Illinois.

Out-migration is highest among individuals with a Bachelor's degree or higher. Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education examined the average annual net migration estimates by education level at the state level. Overall, the Commission concluded that out-migration of highly educated working-age Nebraskans has not been reduced and continues to be a serious issue that Nebraska must address.²

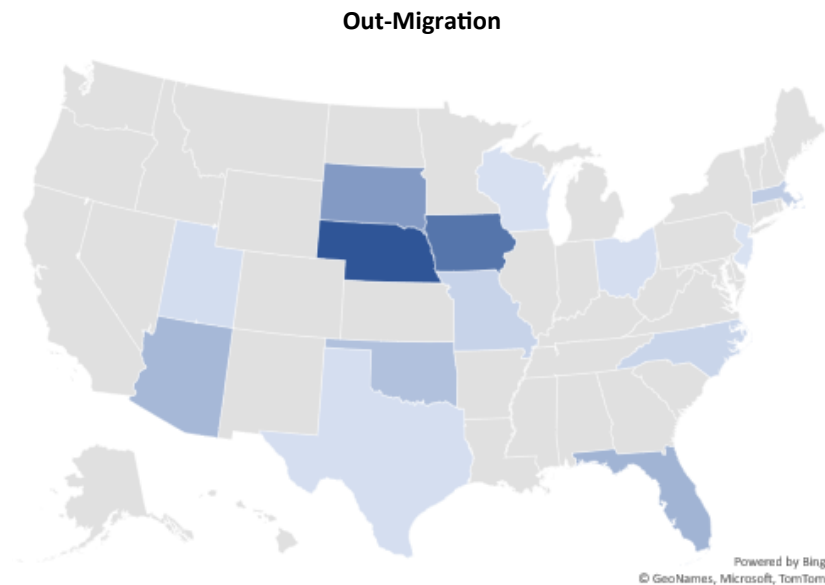


Figure 13

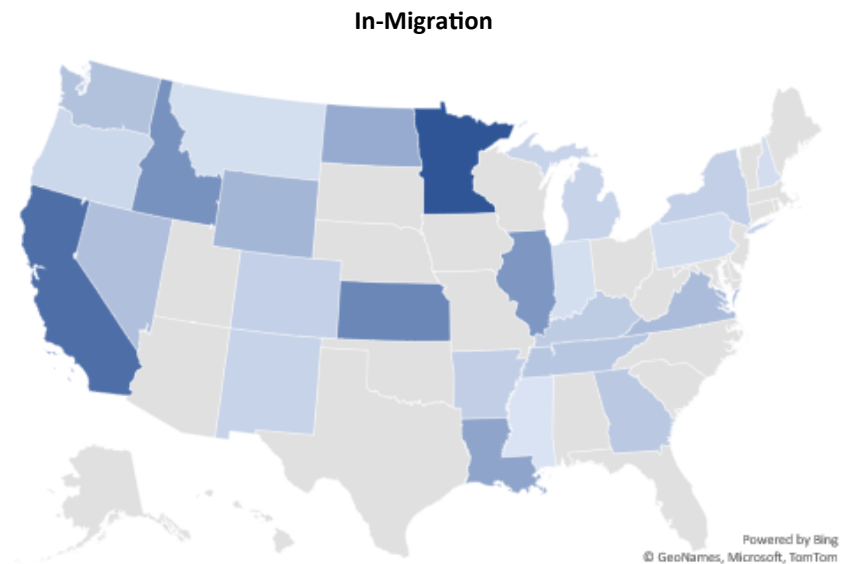


Figure 14

Note: Net migration is the difference between the estimated number of individuals who moved to or from the SCEDD. If net migration is negative (positive), the number of people who moved to the region is lower (higher) than the number of people who left the region.

Sources:
² Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education, *2020 Nebraska Higher Education Progress Report*, available at https://ccpe.nebraska.gov/sites/ccpe.nebraska.gov/files/PR_2020.pdf

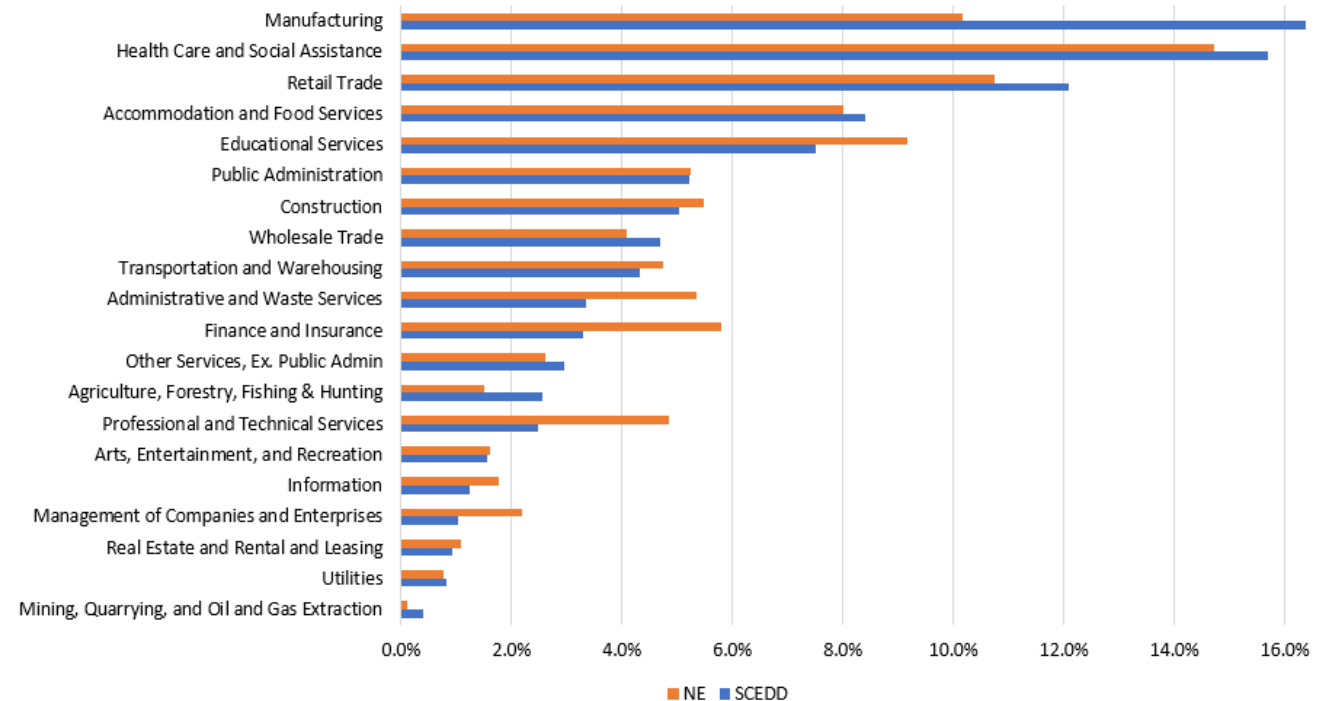
Labor Force Characteristics

Labor force participation rate in both the SCEDD region and the state of Nebraska is high (69% for both areas) while the unemployment rate, as of April, 2021, is low (1.9% SCEDD) and is slightly lower than the unemployment rate in Nebraska overall (2.4%). However, the composition of employment in the SCEDD region differs from Nebraska. In SCEDD, relatively more workers are employed in the industries of agriculture (2.5% vs. 1.5%) and manufacturing (16.4% vs. 10.2%) than in Nebraska overall, whereas fewer workers are employed in the industries of finance and insurance (3.3% vs. 5.8%) and professional and technical services (2.5% vs. 4.9%) than in Nebraska overall; see Figure 15. The employment composition partly explains why average wages are 19.3% lower in the SCEDD region when compared to average wages in Nebraska; however, there are several other important labor market trends to note.

1. Real Net Farm Income

With relatively more workers in the SCEDD region employed in agriculture, and given that nearly two in four jobs in the SCEDD region are tied to agriculture compared to one in four jobs statewide, the health of ag-related markets translates into the health of the SCEDD economy. From 2013 to 2017, real net farm income in Nebraska declined 72% to a low of \$2.31 billion (2020). Since 2017, real Nebraska net farm income has increased. In 2019, it rose to 50% of its 2013 value and it is forecasted to raise to 75% of the 2013 value in 2020.

Figure 15: Percentage of Workers Employed by Industry, 2019



Sources:

US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2020—September 2020;

Nebraska Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, and Local Area Unemployment Statistics, available at: <https://networks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>. USDA, Farm

Income and Wealth Statistics, available at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/farm-income-and-wealth-statistics/>

2. Slower Employment Growth Than Nebraska

Since 2015, employment growth in all industries in the SCEDD region has remained relatively flat (0.3%) compared to positive overall employment growth in Nebraska (2.4%). Approximately 36% of all workers in Nebraska and 44% of all workers in the SCEDD region are employed in the top three industries of Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, and Manufacturing. Since 2015, statewide employment has grown 1.0% in these three industries statewide, yet employment has declined -0.7% in these three industries in the SCEDD region. The low growth in Nebraska and the negative growth in the SCEDD region is driven by large declines in Retail Trade (-4.2% in Nebraska and -7.7% in SCEDD). Whereas Nebraska experienced positive growth in Health Care and Social Assistance (3.9%), the SCEDD region had slightly negative growth in this industry (-0.1%). Employment growth in the SCEDD region has been positive and stronger than Nebraska in several important industries including: Manufacturing (4.4% in SCEDD vs. 2.7% in Nebraska), Transportation and Warehousing (9.2% in SCEDD vs. 2.0% in Nebraska), Finance and Insurance (7.2% in SCEDD vs. 4.3% in Nebraska), and Professional and Technical Services (5.7% in SCEDD vs. 4.6% in Nebraska).

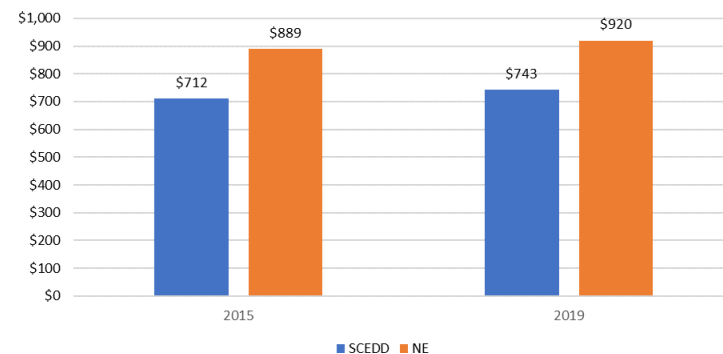
3. Slower Real Wage Growth in Key Industries Than Nebraska

In the SCEDD region, real wages grew 4.4% since 2015, versus 3.5% statewide. However, in the key regional industries of Manufacturing and Health Care and Social Assistance, which together employ nearly one-third of workers in the SCEDD region, real wage growth has been slower than the wage growth for Nebraska: Manufacturing (1.7% in SCEDD vs. 4.3% in Nebraska) and Health Care and Social Assistance (5.9% in SCEDD vs. 6.5% in Nebraska), see Table 4. While the SCEDD region did experience stronger real wage growth in some industries, they tend to be relatively small industries (e.g., Transportation and Warehousing) or declining industries (e.g., Retail Trade).

In 2015, overall, real wages in the SCEDD region were 19.9% below wages in Nebraska; however, due to slower wage growth in key industries over time, very small gains in real wages have occurred in the SCEDD region as real wages are now 19.3% lower than those in Nebraska; see Figure 16. Therefore, the wage gap between the SCEDD region and Nebraska overall barely closed over the past five years.

Table 4	Wage Growth 2015-2019	
	NE	SCEDD
Total, All Industries	3.50%	4.40%
Manufacturing	4.30%	1.70%
Healthcare and Social Assistance	6.50%	5.90%

Figure 16: Real Average Weekly Wage (\$)



Sources:

Nebraska Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, and Local Area Unemployment Statistics, available at: <https://networks.nebraska.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>. USDA, Farm Income and Wealth Statistics, available at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/farm-income-and-wealth-statistics/>

Summary of Human Capital and Labor Force

Generally, the SCEDD region labor force can be characterized by several trends. First, the migration away from rural areas toward cities, declining higher education enrollments, and an aging population. National migration patterns offer an intriguing view as most in-migration has come from more distant states while out-migration tends to be to other Nebraska counties and neighboring states. This trend appears to suggest a shift in the SCEDD workforce composition. To some degree, the labor force in the SCEDD region generally represents Nebraska trends regarding low unemployment and higher participation rates. The labor composition is generally toward lower wage industries in the SCEDD region when compared to Nebraska. Finally, employment is flat in the SCEDD region and wage growth in key industries is slower than in Nebraska overall. **This indicates that the regional economy is not as healthy as the state economy, and that it will be more difficult to attract workers to the region with relatively lower wages.**

Industry Cluster and Emerging & Weakening Industries

Industry Cluster

The location quotient analysis identifies industries that are emerging and that are weakening. Location quotient (LQ) is a ratio of the share of employment in a particular regional industry in the region to the share of employment in that industry nationwide. A LQ of 1.0 indicates the share of employment in a particular industry in the SCEDD region is exactly the same as that in the same industry nationally. If an industry's LQ exceeds (or is below) 1.0, then the SCEDD region is employing more (fewer) workers than the national average. Rather than 1.0, a threshold of 1.1 is used to identify employment concentration and thus export-oriented industries. The size of the bubble is based on employment in the industry. (See figure 17, next page).

The Finance & Insurance and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation industries have relatively high employment concentrations which have strengthened over time so they are classified as "emerging industries" within the SCEDD region. These industries may eventually become a competitive advantage for the region. In particular, given the location and trade region, the SCEDD region could become more important for Greater Nebraska in terms of providing important services for business and households, as well as helping improve quality of life.

Conversely, Construction, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Retail Trade are classified as weakening industries because their employment concentrations have weakened since 2010 when these industries were near the employment concentration threshold (e.g., LQ of 1.1). Although the proportion of SCEDD workers employed in the Construction and Health Care & Social Assistance industries in the SCEDD region has increased, it has not kept pace with the U.S. Moreover, the proportion of SCEDD workers employed in the Retail Trade industry has decreased disproportionately to the national level.

Sources:

Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators. 2019.

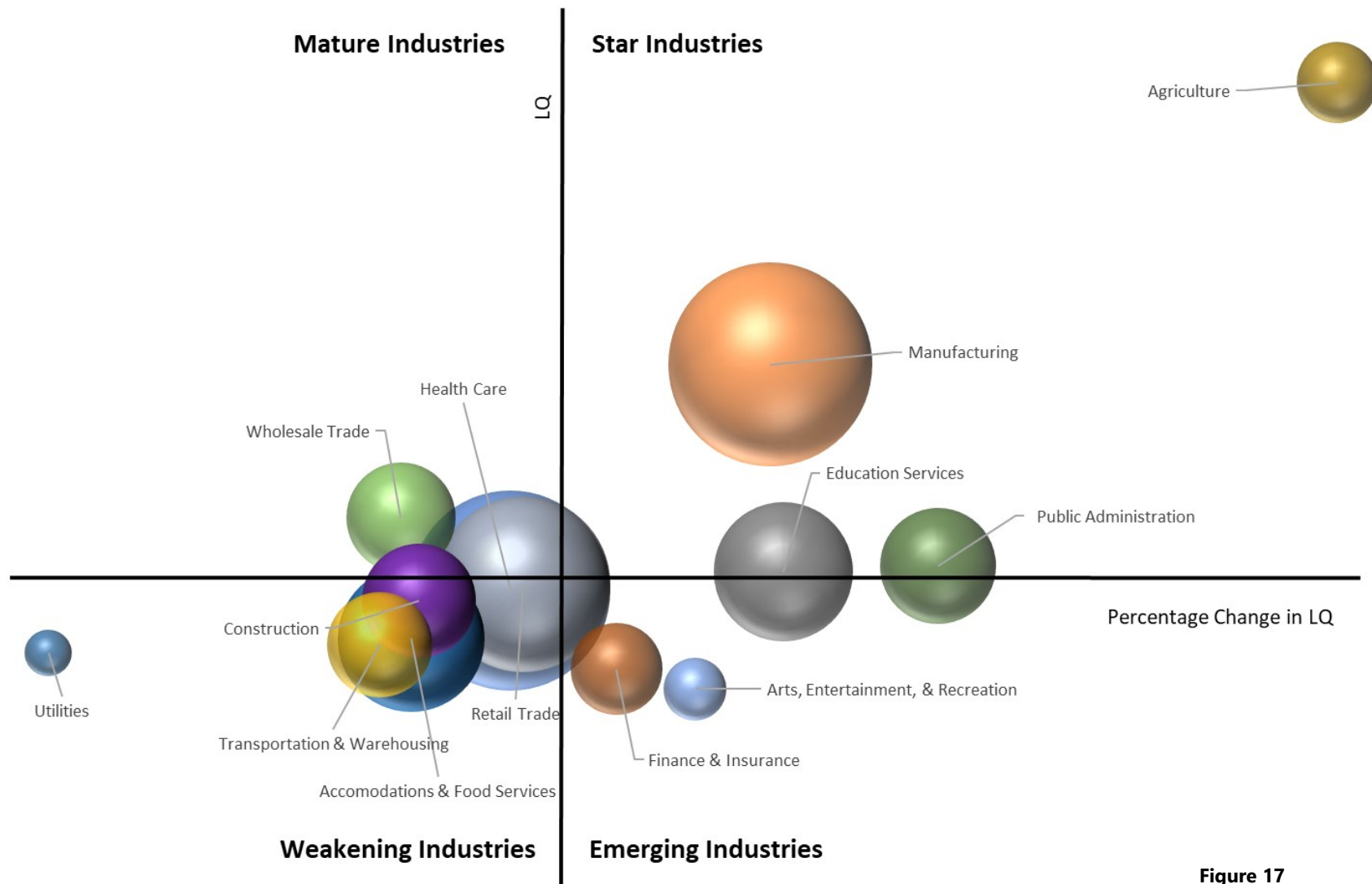


Figure 17

Note: Location quotient (LQ) is a ratio of the share of employment in a particular industry in the region to the share of employment in that industry nationwide. A LQ of 1.0 indicates the share of employment in a particular industry in the SCEDD region is exactly the same as that in the same industry nationally. If an industry's LQ exceeds (is below) 1.0, then the SCEDD region is employing more (fewer) workers than the national average. Rather than 1.0, a threshold of 1.1 is used to identify employment concentration and thus export-oriented industries. Industry categories are based on the LQ level and change since 2010: star industries – LQ at or above 1.1 and increasing; mature industries – LQ at or above 1.1 and decreasing; emerging industries – LQ below 1.1 and increasing; and weakening industries – LQ below 1.1 and decreasing. The size of the bubble is based on employment in the industry.

Sources:
Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 2019.

Emerging & Weakening Industries (continued)

To better understand the change in employment in these industries since 2010, the overall employment change was decomposed into three industry categories:

- 1) A national growth effect: how much of an industry's growth in SCEDD is explained by the overall growth of the national economy.
- 2) An industry mix effect: how much of the share of an industry's growth in SCEDD that is explained by industry growth at the national level
- 3) A regional competitive effect: how much of a change in a given industry is due to some unique competitive advantage that the SCEDD region has.

Notice in Table 5 that Wholesale Trade, Construction, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Retail Trade have large negative values in the regional competitive (share) effect column. This indicates that because the growth in these industries can be explained by national trends in that industry and/or the economy overall, these industries have no unique competitive (share) advantage in the SCEDD region. In fact, employment in the Construction and Health Care & Social Assistance is nowhere near keeping up with employment trends in the industry, and employment in Retail and Wholesale Trade in the SCEDD region is declining more quickly than the industry overall.

Industry Analysis Summary

One of the key takeaways from the industry analysis is how tightly linked the core industries are within the region. Specifically, Manufacturing, Agriculture, Transportation & Warehousing, and Wholesale Trade are tightly connected and play a critical role within the local economy. In addition, two of the four industries represent "star" industries that have a higher location quotient, indicating a source of competitive advantage, and are growing. One point of concern is the weakening of Construction, Wholesale Trade, and service industries within the region such as Health Care & Social Assistance and Retail Trade.

Table 5: Industries by Regional Competitive Effect, 2019

Industry	National Growth Effect	Industry Mix Effect	Regional Competitive Effect
Agriculture	249	-115	562
Manufacturing	1,998	-1,073	161
Educational Services	1,264	-875	163
Public Administration	555	-550	375
Wholesale Trade	810	-506	-1,059
Construction	653	835	-1,016
Health Care / Social Assistance	1,962	808	-2,000
Retail Trade	1,615	-1,073	-1,364



Photo 14: Royal Engineer Composites, Phase 1 Expansion Groundbreaking

Sources:

Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators, 2019.

Photo: Royal Engineered Composites, FB post from previous Ground Breaking

Workforce & Workforce-Related Issues

Based on public input, several workforce and workforce-related issues were identified including workforce shortage, lack of affordable and entry level housing options, lack of childcare options, aging population, and economic recovery. This section focuses on the top two issues.

1. Workforce Shortage

A workforce shortage continues to be a challenge for the SCEDD region. The Central Nebraska Survey of Hiring and Training Needs³ employer survey on skill needs and training practices shows the SCEDD region experiences an inflow of people with less formal education and an outflow of people with more formal education. Nearly 63% of the region's employers reported that issues with labor availability would be present if they were asked to consider an expansion. Moreover, about 76% reported difficulty in finding workers for the occupations they had been trying to hire or recently hired. The top three reasons cited were: 1) not enough applicants, 2) poor work history, and 3) lack of experience.

Table 6

Occupation	High Wage Occupation	% of Businesses Reporting Difficulty in Hiring	Top Reasons for Hiring Difficulty
Registered Nurses (SOC CODE 29-1141)	Yes	90.4%	85.5% - Not enough applicants 49.8% - Wage demands too high 25.8% - Not available for shifts required
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics (SOC CODE 49-3023)	Yes	89.5%	75.2% - Not enough applicants 74.4% - Lack of occupation-specific skills 62.1% - Lack of experience 47.1% - Poor work history
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers (SOC CODE 53-3032)	Yes	80.6%	74.6% - Not enough applicants 72.9% - Lack of experience 63.9% - Poor work history 53.1% - Lack of required licenses/certificates
Machinists (SOC CODE 51-4041)	No	100.0%	100.0% - Lack of experience 100.0% - Lack of occupation-specific skills
Welders, Cutters, Solderers and Brazers (SOC CODE 51-4121)	No	85.6%	87.4% - Not enough applicants 64.9% - Poor work history 63.8% - Lack of experience 57.4% - Lack of occupation-specific skills
Multiple Machine Tool Setters, Operators and Tenders, Metal and Plastic (SOC 51-4081) Computer	No	83.3%	80.0% - Not enough applicants 60.0% - Lack of experience 60.0% - Lack of occupation-specific skills
Controlled Machine Tool Operators, Metal and Plastic (SOC 51-4011)	No	75.5%	71.0% - Lack of experience 71.0% - Wage demands too high 61.5% - Not enough applicants
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General (SOC CODE 49-9071)	No	71.7%	78.0% - Not enough applicants 69.1% - Lack of experience 55.8% - Lack of occupation-specific skills
Identified as a H3 (High Wage, High Skill, and High Demand) occupation by the Nebraska Department of Labor. Source: UNL Bureau of Business Research, 2017, Kearney Area, Hastings Area, and Grand Island Area Skills Gap Report, available at: https://newworks.nebraska.gov/gsipub/index.asp?docid=802			

Based on a skills gap analysis, Table 6 summarizes the top regional occupations that are particularly difficult to fill. Besides Registered Nurses, the difficult-to-fill occupations primarily support the region's cluster industries, in particular, Manufacturing. The top reasons for hiring difficulty cited by employers include "not enough applicants" and "lack of experience" followed by "lack of occupation-specific skills." It will be important for the region to take a multi-faceted approach to the workforce challenge in order to 1) attract more workers with relevant skill sets, 2) provide opportunities for less experienced workers to gain the occupation-specific skills and experiences that are needed, and 3) support and provide educational opportunities for those workers seeking training and degrees.

Sources:

³ Nebraska Departments of Labor and Economic Development, 2017, Kearney, Grand Island, and Hastings Hiring and Training Needs Report, available at: <https://newworks.nebraska.gov/gsipub/index.asp?docid=802>

2. Housing

Availability and quality of existing housing stock varies. Sixty-seven percent of housing in the SCEDD region was built before 1980 and nearly 40% of housing was built before 1960, figure 18, compared to 35.5% of Nebraska. There were a total of 89,882 housing units in the SCEDD region in 2019, an increase of 4,686 (or 5.5%) since 2010 compared to a 6.7% increase in housing units statewide. Most of the new housing is being built in the northern part of the region (Buffalo, Hamilton, Howard, and Merrick counties). These counties had a greater percentage of single family permits issued in 2018 in comparison to their overall single-family housing stock.⁴

In response to the housing shortage, in 2017, the Nebraska Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act was signed into law to channel nearly \$7 million into the Rural Workforce Housing Investment Fund. Funding was to finance affordable housing development projects in communities within counties of less than 100,000 residents. 2017 Recipients in the SCEDD Region:

- Economic Development Council of Buffalo County—\$319,500
- Hastings Economic Development Corporation—\$850,000
- Holdrege Development Corporation—\$319,500
- South Central Economic Development District—\$274,700

In April 2021, the NE Department of Economic Development announced 2020 Rural Workforce Housing Funds awards totaling \$9,126,500 to fourteen applicants statewide. Recipients in the SCEDD Region included:

- Aurora Housing Development Corp—\$1,000,000
- Grand Island Area Economic Development Corp—\$1,000,000

SCEDD Housing Units by Age

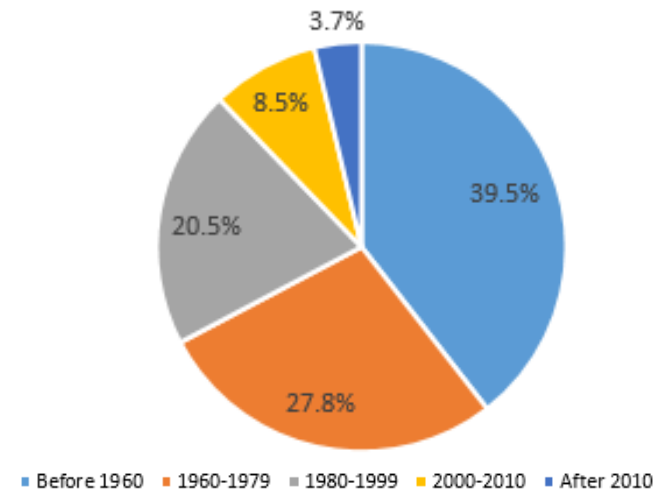


Figure 18

Table 7: Single Family Permits to Current Units

	Single Family Permits		SF Units	% of SF Units
	2018	2019	2019 ACS	
Adams County	38	57	10,814	0.88%
Buffalo County	181	101	14,439	1.95%
Clay County	11	3	2,648	0.53%
Franklin County	5	4	1,596	0.56%
Hall County	85	93	18,331	0.97%
Hamilton County	37	31	3,666	1.85%
Harlan County	14	7	1,771	1.19%
Howard County	17	25	2,674	1.57%
Kearney County	12	14	2,563	1.01%
Merrick County	27	25	3,314	1.57%
Nuckolls County	3	3	2,200	0.27%
Phelps County	11	8	3,659	0.52%
Webster County	2	2	1,686	0.24%
SCEDD District	443	373	69,361	1.18%

Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5 year data estimates <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/>

⁴Nebraska NIFA Interactive Dashboard: <http://nestats.org/> and <https://socds.huduser.gov/permits/index.html>

2. Housing (continued)

SCEDD currently has a Revolving Loan Fund available for Rural Workforce Housing. Applications are accepted for new construction, Purchase Rehab Resell (PRR), and conversion of non-traditional housing.

Within the SCEDD region, 61.4% of homes are owner occupied, with the most owner occupied homes existing in Hamilton county (72.9%) and the least in Harlan county (51.1%), which has Harlan County Lake, a popular recreation destination. The U.S. Postal Service provides information quarterly to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on addresses identified as vacant in the previous quarter. Residential and business vacancy rates for the report area in the second quarter of 2019 for the SCEDD region are 2.3% for residential and 8.8% for business addresses. See Table 8 for county breakdown. Because of the age of housing stock, current vacancies are typically not habitable quality housing options.

Although quality of life and a lower cost of living in Nebraska are often considered strengths, there are still a number households that are housing burdened. A "housing-cost burden" is when a household spends 30% or more of their income on housing costs. Within the SCEDD region, 20% of owners with mortgages and 10.1% of owners without mortgages are considered housing cost burdened for a total of 30.1% of owner households. Amongst renters, 37.3% of renters have a housing cost burden in the SCEDD region. The counties with the highest housing cost burden for households are Nuckolls (41.7%), Adams (40.9%), Buffalo (40.4%) and Hall (37.5%).

Table 8—Residential & Business Vacancy Rate

	Residential Vacancy Rate	Business Vacancy Rate
Adams County	3.50%	11.70%
Buffalo County	1.30%	4.90%
Clay County	0.30%	3.30%
Franklin County	6.20%	21.70%
Hall County	1.40%	8.00%
Hamilton County	2.10%	7.70%
Harlan County	0.20%	0.00%
Howard County	2.40%	14.70%
Kearney County	3.80%	6.80%
Merrick County	2.10%	11.60%
Nuckolls County	6.60%	15.60%
Phelps County	4.80%	14.10%
Webster County	6.00%	21.10%

Summary of Workforce and Workforce-Related Issues

Finding qualified workers remains a significant challenge within the SCEDD region. While the general trend for the SCEDD region is a shortage of qualified workers and applicants for job openings, this problem varies by skill level, industry, and occupation. Recruiting nurses to the region remains a significant challenge as does recruiting skilled manufacturing workers. Rural counties have reported significant difficulties to recruiting and retaining workers with the lack of housing and the quality of housing stock. New housing is largely concentrated in higher populated areas and the quality of housing, on average, is declining in rural counties. The RWHF has provided a much needed boost to housing in the communities that received the awards, but the increased housing is not keeping up with the demand. Many builders are kept busy with custom built homes and do not have the capacity to build the lower market rate homes that are needed in the area. These lower price-point homes also do not provide the margins builders require in order to thrive in today's market.

Sources:

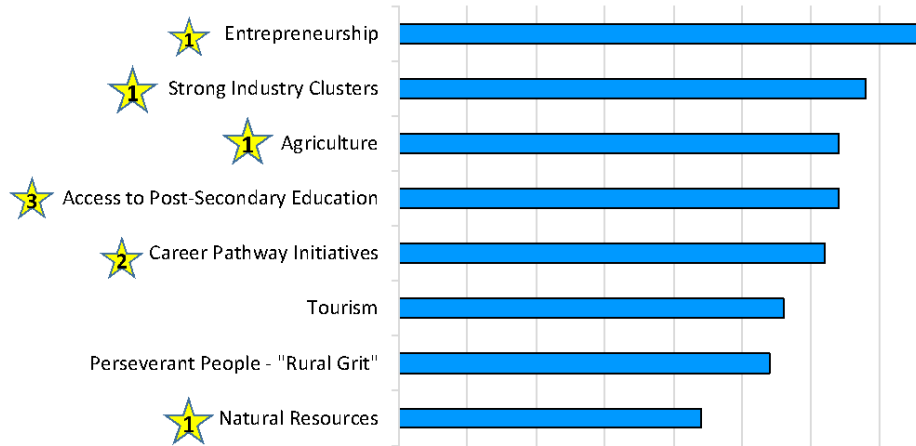
U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey 5 year data estimates <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/>

SWOT ANALYSIS

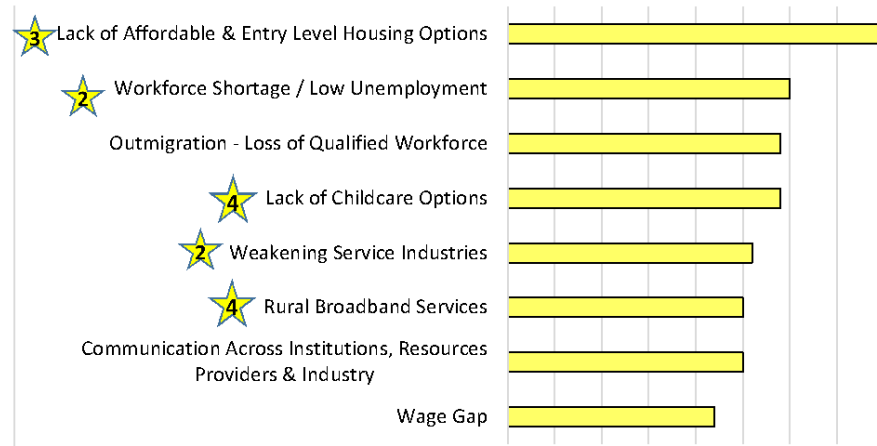
Building on the SWOT Analysis developed for the 2019 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the current SWOT analysis process began in January 2021, and the following summarizes the process:

1. **SWOT Survey:** A survey was emailed to economic developers, city administrators, and city chamber of commerce directors working in the SCEDD region in January and February of 2021. Participants were given background information about the purpose of the survey and asked to confirm and identify any missing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats strengths in the region. Based on the responses from the online survey, changes to the SWOT included the need for resiliency post 2019 flooding and COVID-19.
2. **Prioritization of SWOT:** The SCEDD Economic Developers Forum was held in March 2021, followed by the Chamber of Commerce Directors Forum in April 2021. Participants at the forums included economic developers, city administrators, and community chamber of commerce directors from the SCEDD region. As part of the CEDS process, these forums aim to assist local leaders with creative opportunities to enhance the competitive position of the region and help communities increase their resiliency. Up-to-date, local, and objective data was presented from the CEDS background summary, including changes in the SCEDD region since the last process. Participants were asked to identify any missing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Participants were then asked to rank the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats based on the Eisenhower Matrix.
3. **Refined and Public Input of SWOT:** The findings from the March and April forums were analyzed, reviewed and compiled with the data 2019 SWOT and surveys conducted in January and February 2021. Based on the prioritization from all input, the SWOT was presented at the June 22, 2021 Economic Developers Forum. The SWOT analysis and cumulative priorities were presented to the group for final confirmation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats strengths in the SCEDD region. Discussion was held and the findings of the SWOT were solidified by the participants. The SWOT was put out for 30-day public comment on June 25, 2021.
4. **2021 Final SWOT:** The final SWOT was presented with the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy at the July 29, 2021 South Central Economic Development District, Inc. Board of Directors Meeting and was approved by unanimous vote. Since the 2019 CEDS, the priorities for each quadrant have changed; however the challenges around housing, workforce shortage, and attracting and retaining qualified people remain.

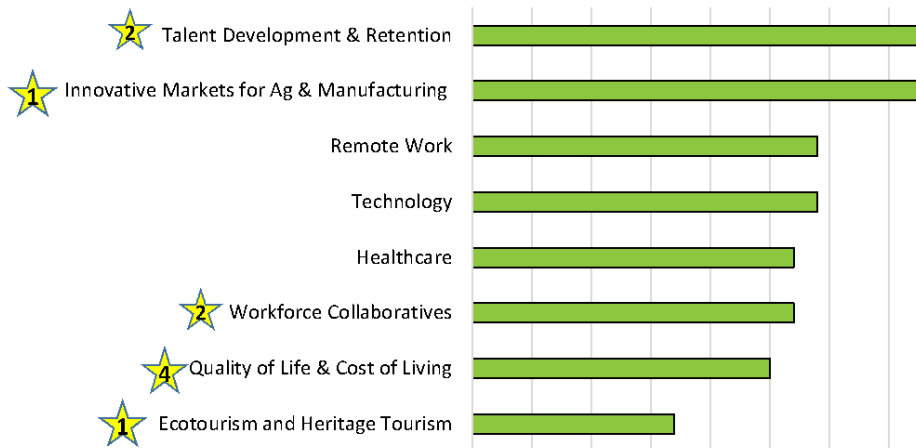
Top Strengths



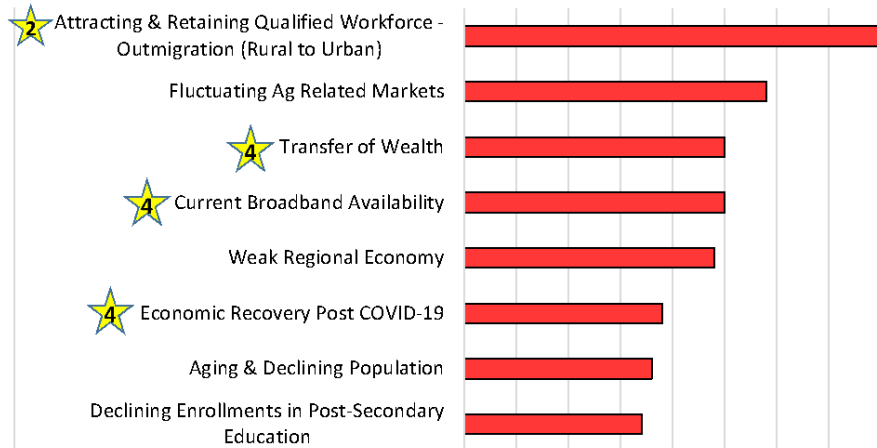
Top Weaknesses



Top Opportunities



Top Threats



NOTE: Rankings are prioritized based on Eisenhower Matrix input (5 points if urgent and important, 3 points if important but not urgent, 3 points if urgent, but not important, and 0 points if not important and not urgent).

★ A Star indicates a South Central Economic Development District, Inc. priority area.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The SCEDD regional economy can be characterized by strong economic clusters around manufacturing and agriculture. Both industries leverage local natural resources, geographic advantages, and infrastructure. However, the heavy reliance on these industries poses significant challenges as it relates to economic resilience. The agricultural sector is highly dependent on higher commodity prices to maintain farmer and supporting industry incomes. Since 2017, real Nebraska net farm income has increased. In 2019, it rose to 50% of its 2013 value and it is forecasted to raise to 75% of its 2013 value in 2020.

The unpredictability of commodity prices and high levels of competition around commodity production will serve as important factors influencing economic resilience in the region. The manufacturing industry also poses several challenges as it relates to economic resilience. The manufacturing sector can be highly cyclical. For example, during the 2008 recession manufacturing employment in the Tri-City area dropped by over 2%.

During meetings with business, non-profit, economic development, and government leaders both in person and virtually, several patterns repeatedly came to the forefront. These issues relate to investing in related diversification to better leverage local resources while spreading economic activity across more product markets within the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, as well as, supporting industries to maintain workers for these key industries.

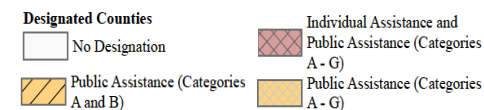
During March 13-23, 2019 several Nebraska counties primarily along Interstate 80 within the SCEDD region endured a Bomb Cyclone and subsequent flooding that ranged from minor / moderate to historic / catastrophic which had not been observed in decades in this region. The worst flooding was along the North and South branches of the Loup River in Howard county and impacted Dannebrog, and along the Wood River,



Photo 15 City of Wood River



Figure 21 FEMA 4420 DR, NE Disaster Declaration as of 10/10/2019



Sources:

USDA, Economic Research Service, Farm Income and Wealth Statistics USDA
Nebraska Department of Labor

Photo 15: City of Wood River Flooding, July 2019

Figure 21: <https://nema.nebraska.gov/recovery/fema-4420-dr-nebraska-severe-winter-storm-straight-line-winds-and-flooding>

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE (Continued)

which affected Hall county and the community of Wood River. This flooding was characterized by high water levels and compounded by the unusually severe break-up of thick river ice. Then, in July 2019, after a torrential rain storm, the communities along the Platte River in Buffalo and Hall counties, such as Kearney, Gibbon, Shelton and Wood River were impacted by flooding. see Fig 19 for the FEMA Disaster Declaration. Flood recovery these from events was still ongoing two years later.

The communities and businesses in counties affected by the floods in 2019 were still working on recovery efforts when the COVID-19 pandemic shut everything down; early March 2020. This pandemic was an economic threat to every business sector and many households in the SCEDD Region were impacted. Schools closed, unemployment was at an all-time high, and families who had never before needed financial assistance found themselves seeking help for the first time. Community organizations that rallied together during the 2019 flooding continued their collaboration to help people with food boxes, rent and utility assistance, and general financial aid. In light of all the challenges, people were willing to give and accept help from their friends and communities, truly highlighting the best in humanity.

The Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC) conducted Business Response Surveys in April and May of 2020 to help better understand the impact coronavirus (COVID-19) had on the revenue and workforce of organizations across the state. The surveys also sought to discover the best ways to support businesses during this economic shock. The majority of respondents to the surveys in both round one and round two were from small businesses that employed less than twenty people.

During the first survey, there were over 6,500 respondents statewide. Eighty-seven percent of businesses statewide said the pandemic had a negative impact on their business, and 91% of businesses located in the SCEDD region said the same. The top three concerns identified by businesses statewide included: financial impact and/or liquidity and capital (44%); decreased consumer confidence and spending (33%); and going out of business (16%). The "going out of business" concern was higher among businesses classified as food service and accommodations; retail trade; and arts, entertainment, recreation and other services. Within the SCEDD region over 400 business participated in the survey in round one. The top three concerns within the SCEDD region were: financial impact and/or liquidity and capital (78%); duration of outbreak/quarantine effects (69%); and decreased consumer confidence and spending (56%).



Photo 16: Dannebrog, NE following the March 2019 Bomb Cyclone

Sources:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9ce70c78f5a44813a326d20035cab95a>

Photo 16: Credit: Bob Geiger — <https://www.weather.gov/gid/march2019flood>

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE (Continued)

NBDC's follow up survey in May 2020 found that the pandemic continued to negatively impact revenue for businesses and many people were still concerned about decreased consumer confidence and spending. Two of the top concerns identified in round two were: the ability for businesses to draw consumers back (44% Nebraska and 37% SCEDD) and the ability to develop new sources of revenue (29% Nebraska and 24% SCEDD). Businesses that have been especially hard hit were those in Service and Retail. It was also anticipated that new startups will begin during this recovery period.

As a part of the CARES Act funding received by SCEDD, during the fall of 2020, business interviews were conducted with 102 businesses and 61 community stakeholders to hear first-hand accounts of the economic shock and impact of the pandemic on the region. Major findings from this qualitative data include: the need for cash flow for operations; staffing and marketing; mental health support; workforce development; and the need to learn new ways of expanding business capabilities through a digital "front door". Based on this research, a virtual Coffee Chat was developed and began in January 2021. This provided a new opportunity for SCEDD Staff to maintain the pulse of the local economic developers and chamber of commerce professionals in the region and offered more real-time feedback on events in the district. Opportunities for training and consulting for businesses within the district to develop or improve digital marketing and/or E-commerce for the area began in April 2021 and will be ongoing.

The pandemic highlighted the need for improved broadband capabilities. SCEDD partnered with the other seven Economic Development Districts and an outside agency to market a statewide broadband mapping project to identify current real-time broadband experiences and how to prioritize improvement opportunities state-wide.

The pandemic in 2020 brought forth urgency in SCEDD's role to reinforce information networks critical for economic recovery and resiliency within the SCEDD region. Information networks have always been critical for information and education dissemination among community stakeholders. Virtual forms of connection became commonplace in 2020 as people became more familiar and comfortable with using technology to maintain communication. SCEDD also evolved in order to remain a valuable resource to assist the region with resiliency. Because of geographic dispersion in rural areas, it can be difficult to establish and maintain information networks, but with technology, this barrier is quickly diminishing.

During 2020-2021 technology has, and will continue to, allow SCEDD to strengthen informational networks through the widely accepted use of email surveys and virtual meetings, which have been critical to the reporting process. In particular, virtual meetings have enabled the SCEDD team to build connections with business leaders in multiple locations and industries (see table 9—page 32).

Sources:

Nebraska Business Response Survey Report: Round 1, Nebraska Business Response Survey Report: Round 2 April and May 2020

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE (Continued)

Table 9

Economic Characteristic	Resilience Issue	Initiatives to Manage Issue
High dependence on agricultural and manufacturing sectors	Highly cyclical industries which hampers strategic investment, while weakening worker productivity and resource allocation	Enhancing financing resources, information and strategies to more effectively encourage strategic investment notwithstanding commodity and economic cycles.
		Related diversification to leverage existing strengths while spreading risk across multiple products/industries.
	Maintaining natural resources and infrastructure	Encouraging sustainable farming practices.
Weakening but critical supporting industries	Insufficient workers to maintain growth. Recruiting workers from other locations is hampered by weakening supporting industries.	Encourage affordable housing investments, monitor health care, day care, retail, accommodations, and food services.
Rural depopulation	Housing, private investment	Community investments to help people want to stay in the region.
Worker Shortage	Unable to capitalize on growth, develop productive routines, rising recruiting costs	Invest in automation
		Enhance management practices to minimize turnover, worker development to enhance productivity.

SCEDD staff also researched best practices on how communities have prospered after economic shocks to develop resiliency plans for our region. Based on this research, plans developed for a virtual Coffee Chat that began in January 2021 and outreach to communities for Community Growth & Innovation project requests for 2021. Opportunities for training and consulting for SCEDD businesses to develop or improved digital marketing and/or E commerce for the area began in April 2021 and will be ongoing.

Table 10 (page 33) is a matrix including critical players in the regional economy and the meetings and organizations which sponsor such connections. While some areas are well represented and connected, others are less so. SCEDD and other economic development players will play a critical role as conveners of these connections. The first part of their role will be to reinforce existing organizations and players in their connections. This would be to better publish, encourage, and invest in the conveners of information within the region such as those identified in the table. The second part is to establish connections between the agriculture, manufacturing and education sectors. Building organizational mechanisms by which these sectors can collaborate, communicate and coordinate will be critical to the ongoing economic resilience in the region.

Sources:

Nebraska Business Response Survey Report: Round 1, Nebraska Business Response Survey Report: Round 2 April and May 2020

Table 10

	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Education	Economic Development	Retail	Healthcare
Ag.	Nebraska Farm Bureau's Annual Meeting and Convention, USDA Farm Credit Services	Hasting Area Manufacturing Association	4-H Clubs County Fairs FFA Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) Skills USA	Night Markets Alliance for the Future of Agriculture Center for Rural Affairs NExtGen Chamber Agriculture Committee Hastings Agri-Business Committee	Local Farmers' Markets CPI & Aurora Coop GROW NEBRASKA	
Manuf.		Midwest Nebraska Manufacturing Group Hastings Area Manufacturing Association	MakersSpace, Hastings Public Library Skills USA CCC Career Academy	Hasting Area Manufacturing Association Midwest Nebraska Manufacturing Group Area Chambers of Commerce NExtGen		
Education			Career Pathways Education Service Units High Schools Middle Schools	InternNE Business & Chamber Education Committees Kearney Community Connections Meeting Hastings BIE Committee	Career/Job Fairs	DHHS Rural Nebraska Healthcare Network KHOP program at UNK
Econ Dev				SCEDD Meeting EDO Forums	Downtown Associations	
Retail					Retail roundtable (Hastings) Nebraska Retail Federation Shop Kearney Community Meeting	
Healthcare						Tri-Cities Medical Response System DHHS Nebraska Rural Health Association (NeRHA)

STRATEGIC DIRECTION, ACTION PLAN, & EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The strategic planning process involved public input similar to the SWOT analysis process described above.

Mission Statement: The South Central Economic Development District exists to develop and promote a positive economic climate which supports regional growth.

Vision Statement: The vision is to be the resource businesses and communities rely on for advice and connections to programs designed to help businesses grow and insure community sustainability.

The SCEDD Strategy Committee identified four priority areas for the region: (1) industry growth and innovation (2) workforce development, (3) housing development, and (4) community development. For each priority area, the Strategy Committee set goals; and for each goal, objectives and action items were outlined to accomplish the goals. The table below summarizes the number of objectives and action items for each priority area.

Table 11: Summary of Total Number of Objectives & Action Items per Priority

Priority	Total Number of:	
	Objectives	Action Items
Industry Growth & Innovation—Table 12	4	6
Workforce Development - Table 13	3	5
Housing Development—Table 14	3	4
Community Development—Table 15	3	7

Evaluation Framework

To evaluate the effectiveness of the CEDS goals and objectives, direct and indirect measures were identified. The direct measures are tied specifically to the strategic goals and objectives so that what is working or not working can be better identified and subsequent action can be taken. The indirect measures are broader measures of wealth creation in the region. Given the CEDS goals and objectives are asset-based strategies, these indirect measures should improve if the direct measures are successfully being met. The direct and indirect measures are presented on the following pages by priority area and with their respective goal, objective, and action item.

Action Plan

PRIORITY AREA #1: Industry Growth & Innovation

Rationale: Cluster industries in the region are tightly connected to the natural and infrastructure resources. Specifically, the soils, water and transportation corridors play a critical role in the Agriculture, Manufacturing and Wholesale Trade industries. There is some concern regarding the diversity of the economy as economic cycles and commodity pricing may inhibit strategic investment and innovation. Investing in industries tied to local natural resources can enhance location-based stability compared to employers with fewer location-based resources. That said, over dependence on core industries within the region can lead to instability and high risk to economic cycles. Thus, it may be important to invest in related diversification within the core industries to enhance strategic investment and innovation, diversify, and leverage local natural resources. The core industries are maintaining some level of advantage within the region but there is also some need to invest in maintaining supporting industries to help retain and recruit workers.

Goal #1: To grow, sustain, and integrate efforts related to diversifying the regional economy, particularly in the agriculture-manufacturing-wholesale trade industry cluster.

Table 12. PRIORITY AREA #1: Industry Growth & Innovation				
Objective	Action	Implementation Partners	Direct Measure	Indirect Measure
Enhance awareness about innovative efforts within industries in the region and the state	Increase awareness of conveners and opportunities to participate	Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development; Nebraska Manufacturing Advisory Council; Local Economic Developers; Hastings Area Manufacturers Association; Central Nebraska Manufacturing Partnership	# of communications on innovative efforts	Patents per 1,000 workers Proprietors per person
			# of participants from SCEDD Region	
Reduce barriers to start, transition, and grow a business (i.e., to innovation in general)	Identify barriers that may prohibit new ideas/businesses from coming to fruition	Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development; Local Economic Developers; SCEDD	List of key barriers is developed	
	Partner with agencies/organizations in the region to provide services for new entrepreneurs to navigate the entrepreneurial process	Rural Enterprise Assistance Project; Nebraska Enterprise Fund; Nebraska Business Development Center; GrowNE; USDA; University of Nebraska;	# of referrals	

Table 12. PRIORITY AREA #1 (Cont.): Industry Growth & Innovation

Objective	Action	Implementation Partners	Direct Measure	Indirect Measure
Support diverse agriculture-manufacturing innovation	Facilitate collaboration among strategic partners to examine, prioritize and nurture innovative ideas and alternative agriculture-manufacturing opportunities.	Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development; Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska; Nebraska Manufacturing Advisory Council; Local Economic Developers; Nebraska Extension; State and Local FFA	Value of products and services diverted from outside of the region to inside the region	Total employment growth
			# of entities seeking assistance with alternative agriculture-manufacturing ideas/opportunities	Wage growth
Support ecotourism and heritage tourism	Facilitate collaboration among strategic partners to examine opportunities in ecotourism/heritage tourism	Chambers of Commerce; University of Nebraska; Great Plains Ecotourism; Nebraska Dept. of Tourism; SCEDD Regional Tourism Entities	Increase in # of tourists to South Central Nebraska	Revenue and employment growth in tourism industries
	Increase awareness of opportunities available to entities for capitalizing on existing tourist events (crane and pelican migration)			

PRIORITY AREA #2: Workforce Development

Rationale: There are a number of encouraging and sobering trends as it relates to the workforce in the SCEDD region. Specifically, the low unemployment and high labor force participation show both job and worker opportunities. The region is challenged with greater employment growth for lower skill workers as opposed to higher skill workers. Migration data suggests a shift in worker composition that may inhibit innovation and growth, commonly referred to brain drain. Finally, the very low unemployment remains a constraint to growth. Short of developing additional workforce, businesses in the region will struggle to meet demands.

Goal #2: To grow, sustain, and integrate efforts related to diversifying the regional economy, particularly in the agriculture-manufacturing wholesale trade industry cluster.

Table 13. PRIORITY AREA #2: Workforce Development

Objective	Action	Implementation Partners	Direct Measure	Indirect Measure
Enhance awareness of innovative recruitment and retention practices in other rural areas across the nation	Identify innovative recruitment and retention practices that are successful and educate key stakeholders about these findings	Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development; Healthcare Leadership; Agriculture Leadership; Manufacturing Leadership; Education Leadership	# of innovative practices identified # of opportunities to educate and inform on the best practices	Total employment growth
Facilitate collaboration among strategic partners to address education, training, and workforce development needs of the regional business community	Provide opportunities to deliver messages and experiences regarding manufacturing and trades-based careers to increase awareness among students, parents, teachers, and administrators	Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development; Nebraska Dept. of Labor; Local Economic Development Organizations; Career Pathways; Central Nebraska Manufacturing Partnership; Axios; SCEDD Vocational Camp	# of messages to targets # of youth experiences	Increase in labor pool with job-specific skills that increase the workforce gap
	Work with high schools to expand options for students to obtain trades-based skills; facilitate partnerships between schools and businesses	Education Leadership; Manufacturing & Business Leadership	# of high schools implementing trades-based programs	
	Support efforts by the Nebraska Departments of Labor & Economic Development and the Bureau of Business Research to maintain and update labor availability and skills gap research	Nebraska Dept. of Labor; Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development; Bureau of Business Research	# of communications on how the labor availability and skills gap research is being used to address workforce issues in the region to the Nebraska Departments of Labor & Economic Development and the Bureau of Business Research	
Reduce barriers to full labor participation	Identify and prioritize community barriers to full labor participation, such as childcare, transportation, healthcare, training, and education; work with agencies/organizations in the region to create and/or enhance programs to address these barriers	Nebraska Children & Families Foundation; Central Community College; University of Nebraska-Kearney; Hastings College; Kearney Works; Central Nebraska Manufacturing Partnership; Community Action Partnership; Crossroads Mission; NE Dept. of Health & Human Services; SCEDD; Businesses; Communities	# of community assessments conducted # of prioritized barriers addressed # of programs utilized	Increased labor force participation rate Total employment growth Poverty rate decline

PRIORITY AREA #3: Housing Development

Rationale: Currently, the workforce is insufficient to fully capitalize on opportunities within businesses in the region. This requires recruiting and in-migration to meet local employment needs. The ongoing challenge is that wages within the region are lower than those found in Lincoln and Omaha. Also, housing costs and the quality of housing in the SCEDD region pose significant barriers to recruiting and retaining workers. Enhancing the quality of housing stock in rural areas and encouraging affordable housing options will be important to encourage economic development and as well as recruit and retain workers and their families.

Goal #3: To increase the quality and quantity of housing opportunities in the region.

Table 14. PRIORITY AREA #3: Housing Development				
Objective	Action	Implementation Partners	Direct Measure	Indirect Measure
Encourage regulations and the enforcement thereof to support housing development and community specific needs	Examine regulations that are prohibitive, limiting or supportive of housing development, redevelopment and rehab. Recommend revision and/or enforcement as appropriate	Local Governments; League of Nebraska Municipalities; SCEDD; HomeNE	# of communities in which regulations are examined # of recommendations for revision and/or enforcement	# of Building Permits Increased average permit value Decrease in substandard properties
	Identify communities interested in addressing substandard properties and provide support and implementation	Local Governments; SCEDD	# of communities addressing substandard areas	Increase of Municipal tax base
Assist communities to identify and address substandard properties	Convene and educate municipalities on regional options for collaboration	Local Governments; SCEDD; Omaha Municipal Land Bank; League of Nebraska Municipalities; Consultants; HomeNE	# of educational opportunities # of collaborations and connections	
Increase housing options in communities	Work with community groups and businesses to realize housing development, redevelopment and rehab	Community Groups; CRA/CDA; Local Governments; Contractors/Developers; SCEDD	# of housing units developed # of housing units redeveloped # of housing units rehabbed	

PRIORITY AREA #4: Community Development

Rationale: Few communities in the region increased in population in the most recent census. The trend in rural Nebraska is a decline in population. In order for communities to be relevant and thrive, they must be proactive in assessing and addressing opportunities as well as developing resiliency. These opportunities include engaging existing residents while attracting new residents; growing their economic base by fostering business development and expansion to increase employment; and enhancing quality of life measures. These measures include broadband expansion, healthcare access, alternative energy development, childcare availability, transportation options, as well as infrastructure improvements of include streets, facilities, trails, parks, downtown revitalization and more.

Goal #4: The goal is to mobilize communities to flourish by assisting them in their endeavor to increase quality of life.

Table 15. PRIORITY AREA #4: Community Development				
Objective	Action	Implementation Partners	Direct Measure	Indirect Measure
Increase awareness of services, tools and resources as well as networking and educational opportunities that will support community development	Promote services, tools and resources	Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development; Nebraska Development Network-Central Region; League of Nebraska Municipalities; Nebraska Regional Officials Council; Nebraska Dept. of Environment & Energy; Environmental Protection Agency; HomeNE; SCEDD	# of events	Increased participation in services, tools and resources
	Connect communities to resources		# of promotions	
Encourage community development, capacity building, and implementation of community projects	Conversations with local leaders and idea development	Local Governments; SCEDD; Community Groups; Businesses; Nebraska Dept. of Economic Development; USDA Rural Development; Economic Development Administration	# of requests for resources/assistance	Community engagement with SCEDD on a regular basis Community momentum serves as a catalyst for additional community activity (activity breeds activity)
	Facilitate community meetings to identify and prioritize opportunities		# of community facilitation activities and conversations	
	Develop and plan projects		# of projects planned	
	Identify Funding Resources and assist with applications		# of applications completed	
Empower communities to be resilient when facing economic disruptions.	Facilitation of resiliency and contingency discussions and plans	NROC; Nebraska Development Network-Central Region; SCEDD; Engineering & Planning firms; Chambers of Commerce; Local Economic Developers	# of facilitated discussions # of resiliency plans created	Increased community confidence Increased community stability

BOARD COMPOSITION

South Central Economic Development District, Inc.

Government Representatives

Name	Government	Positon
Dale Curtis	Adams County	County Commissioner
Timothy Higgins	Buffalo County	County Commissioner
Barb Barnett	Clay County	County Zoning Administrator
Raquel Felzien	Franklin County	City of Franklin Clerk
Mary Berlie	Hall County	Grand Island Area Economic Development Corporation
Roger Nunnenkamp	Hamilton County	County Commissioner
Christian Schluntz	Harlan County	County Commissioner
Michael Coghlan	Howard County	Executive Director St. Paul Development Corporation
Robert Swanson	Kearney County	County Commissioner
Edward Dexter	Merrick County	County Commissioner
David Mussmann	Nuckolls County	County Commissioner
Theresa Puls	Phelps County	County Commissioner
Marilyn Alber	Webster County	Blue Hill City Council Member
Gene Horne	Webster County—Alternate	Red Cloud City Council Member

Stakeholder Representatives

Name	Company/Enterprise	Position
Marni Danhauer	Central Community College—Grand Island	Associate Dean of Extended Learning Services
Keith Dubas	De-Ly Realty	Real Estate Sales Associate
Linda Glause	Five Points Bank	AVP/Mortgage Officer

CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE, STAFF LIST

South Central Economic Development District, Inc.

CEDS Strategy Committee

Name	Organization	Position
Kelsey Bergen	Aurora Area Chamber & Economic Development	Director
Charity Adams	Village of Cairo	Community Dev. & Marketing Director
Darren Robinson	The Economic Council of Buffalo County	Executive Director
Michael Coghlan	St. Paul Economic Development	Executive Director
Michael Krings	Hastings Economic Development Corporation	Interim Executive Director
Mary Berlie	Grand Island Area Economic Development Corp	Assistant Director
Lorri Bantam	City of Alma	City Administrator
Ron Tillery	Phelps County Development Corp.	Executive Director
Jeff Hofaker	City of Sutton	City Administrator
Matt Cederburg	City of Minden	City Administrator
Miles McGinnis	City of Central City	Economic Development Director
Mary Scroggins	City of Superior	Economic Development Director
Jarrod McCartney	Heritage Tourism, Red Cloud	Executive Director
Kelly Gewecke	Nebraska Department of Economic Development	Central Field Service Representative
Twilya L'ecuyer	Nebraska Department of Economic Development	Economic Development Consultant

Staff List

Name	Position
Sharon Hueftle	Executive Director
LeAnn Jochum	Deputy Director
Lori Ferguson	Community Consultant
Craig Eberle	Business & Community Consultant
Josh Young	Business & Community Consultant
Sheri Alber	Fiscal Officer
Kristy Borden	Grant Assistant

CEDS AUTHORS & PHOTOGRAPHY

South Central Economic Development District, Inc.

Authors

Dr. Bree Dority

PhD, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2008

B.S.B.A., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2003

Dr. Daniel Chaffin

PhD, Michigan State University, 2015

MBA, University of Colorado, 2008

B.S., Brigham Young University, 2004

Eileen Rainey

M.A. University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2001

B.A. Doane University, 1996

Photography

Diane Murphey

Nebraska Tourism

Position

Associate Dean, College of Business & Technology

University of Nebraska-Kearney

Assistant Professor, Management

University of Nebraska-Kearney

Community Consultant

Photographer, Texhoma, TX

Nebraska Department of Tourism