



NORTH CENTRAL REGION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EXTENSION IMPACT REPORT 2025



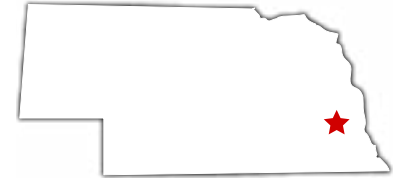
UNIVERSITY
OF NEBRASKA



NEBRASKA



Location: Lincoln, NE
<https://extension.unl.edu/>



9,522



EDUCATIONAL CONTACTS



2,161

Participants completed SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING



\$843 THOUSAND
GRANTS & RESOURCES generated by communities

IMPACT INDICATORS

Educational Contacts	9,522
Number of community or organizational plans/policies developed	26
Number of community or organizational plans/policies adopted or implemented	7
Number of participants reporting new leadership roles and opportunities undertaken	44
Number of volunteer hours for community generated work	302
Dollar value of organization and/or community-generated volunteer hours based on Independent Sector hr value	\$10,507
Dollar value of grants and resources leveraged/generated by communities	\$843,000
Number of participants completing skill development training programs offered through Community Development Extension	2,161
Dollar value of grants and other resources received by Community Development programs	\$980,248
Number of Community Development full-time equivalents (FTEs) — i.e., FTEs funded by Extension specifically for Community Development Extension programming.	14.0

IMPACT STATEMENTS

■ Small Business Program Helps 1,000th Business Open Its Doors

A year ago, Joel Yera was working the night shift as a sanitation worker in Grand Island. Today, he owns and operates Yera Transportation, a growing business that hauls everything from furniture to farm and construction equipment across the Midwest.

Yera is one of more than [1,000 Nebraska entrepreneurs](#) who have launched or expanded a business with support from Rural Prosperity Nebraska's [Small Business Program](#). Guided by Rural Prosperity Nebraska Extension Educator Sandra Barrera, the program helps entrepreneurs move from idea to action through one-on-one coaching, technical assistance, and trusted connections.

For Yera, that meant building a business plan, securing financing, and purchasing two trucks and flatbed trailers. Just weeks after opening, he was already planning for growth.

"It feels good to be your own boss," Yera said.

Since launching the Small Business Program in 2015, Barrera has helped entrepreneurs across Nebraska navigate the stages of business development — from permits and financing to site selection and expansion. Her work begins with a simple but important question: What is your passion?

That question has helped turn ideas into action for more than 1,000 Nebraska entrepreneurs — business owners who are creating jobs and strengthening local economies in communities across the state.

These businesses do more than create income for their owners. They fill storefronts, strengthen local supply chains, and keep dollars circulating in Nebraska communities. Through the Small Business Program, Rural Prosperity Nebraska is helping entrepreneurs turn local passion into lasting economic opportunity.



Joel Yera, owner, Yera Transportation, who received support from the Rural Prosperity Nebraska's Small Business Program. Photo credit: Russell Shaffer.

■ Community Leaders Complete County Official Online Learning Network Course

In partnership with the Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO), Nebraska Extension's [County Official Online Learning Network](#) (COOL Network) is strengthening local government leadership across Nebraska by equipping county officials with practical knowledge, stronger peer networks, and greater confidence to serve effectively.

Now entering its fifth year, the COOL Network has supported more than 150 county officials from 66 of Nebraska's 93 counties through accessible, applied leadership education designed specifically for local government. Designed for newer county officials, the program combines three weeks of online learning with an in-person session focused on the core functions of county government and public leadership.

Participants build practical knowledge in county governance, finance, human resources, leadership, and public service responsibilities — developing a stronger foundation for informed decision-making and effective local governance. The program draws on expertise from Nebraska Extension, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, and the University of Nebraska Omaha, connecting county officials with university faculty, government practitioners, and subject-matter experts from across the state.

Just as important, the program creates space for county officials to connect with peers across Nebraska and strengthen collaboration beyond the course.

The COOL Network addresses a critical need in Nebraska: preparing county officials to navigate increasingly complex local challenges with greater confidence, competence, and clarity. By investing in the knowledge and leadership capacity of county officials, the program is helping build stronger counties, more effective local governance, and more responsive public leadership across the state.



Rural Prosperity Nebraska Extension Educator Jordan Rasmussen (far left) celebrates the completion of the 2025 COOL Network course with graduates from across the state.