

CEC 2022

Columbus, Nebraska



Conference Schedule (subject to change)

Wednesday, April 27

- 11:00am Registration & Lunch
Lunch – served until 11:45am
Location: The Friedhof Building, 1270 27th Ave, Columbus, NE 68601
- 11:45am Welcome
[Jim Bulkley, Mayor of Columbus](#)
- Keynote
A Columbus Serial Entrepreneur's Story
[Scott Mueller, Entrepreneur & Coworking Space Founder](#)
Serial Entrepreneur and veteran local property developer Scott Mueller will share why he invests time and money in new startup-up ventures and community support systems like the leadership of the Columbus Chamber Entrepreneurship Committee and other big events.
- 12:50pm Group Photo (Frankfort Square Stage)
- 1:30pm Breakout Session I
Location: Local area businesses
- ***Enhancing Quality of Life Through Placemaking (Walking Tour)***
[Kim Wilson, Professor, UNL College of Engineering](#)
Placemaking can restore or enhance community assets that support a high quality of life. As rural community's economies, environments, and demographics continue to change and evolve, developing locally-driven solutions to these challenges is critical to the long-term vitality. By bringing in new ideas, businesses, amenities, and social spaces, rural towns can help foster place attachment and encourage young people to stay in or return to their communities. Learn criteria that you use in your community to strengthen place and quality of life. Put your new knowledge to use as you walk through Columbus's downtown during this session.
 - ***Exploring the Impacts of Demographic Trends in Nebraska's Rural Communities***
[Josie Gatti Schafer, Director, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research](#)
Demographic data and insights can help your community to understand a range of trends that impact community life and local economies. As a result, this data can help your community plan and strategize for the future. See how Nebraska's demographic makeup is changing, including the workforce and aging and compare and contrast rural communities across the state on key demographics.

- ***A Collaboration for Local Entrepreneurs***

[Doris Lux, Market23](#)

[Janell Anderson-Ehrke, Grow Nebraska](#)

Farmers Markets are the only source of revenue for 90% of small farmers, just like holiday craft shows are for 87% of crafters in Nebraska. Learn how to plant the seed for local producers and crafters going from seasonal to year-round vendors. This session will focus on growing the local market statewide and using Google Maps and social media to attract year-round sales.

- ***Nebraska Regional Food Systems Initiative***

[Rex Nelson, Extension Educator, Rural Prosperity Nebraska](#)

Explore how expanding your local food industry creates opportunities for community engagement, entrepreneurship, and increased food access

- ***Unleashing the Power of Local Assets***

[K.C. Belitz, Chief Operating Officer, Nebraska Community Foundation](#)

Communities across Nebraska are imagining a brighter future and using the tools of philanthropy to unleash abundant local assets in their place. Volunteers in communities, whether the population is 50 or 25,000, are connecting ambitious people to build stronger communities and a Greater Nebraska. You will hear 4 inspiring success stories from the Nebraska Community Foundation network that you can replicate in your hometown!

- ***Transfer of Leadership in Rural Communities***

[Lindsay Hastings, Professor, UNL Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communications](#)

The United States is poised to experience its largest transfers of leadership (56% of management occupations) in its history. Preparing rural community leadership for these transitions will be critical. This presentation will review new research results in rural community leadership transfer, offering several important considerations for Nebraska's leadership pipeline.

3:00pm

Breakout Session II

Location: Local area businesses

- ***Making Your Business (or Community) a Must-Visit Destination***

[Kristin Malek, Hospitality and Tourism Faculty, Rural Tourism and Event Extension Specialist, UNL](#)

In this jam-packed interactive session, learn how to make your business (or community) a must-visit destination! We will go through the design thinking process where we will learn how to identify your ideal customer segment(s), create a unique customer experience journey, and learn how to market it effectively! Discussion will also include utilizing first impression/secret shopper programs, recruiting and training for the right employees, and maximizing word of mouth to get your visitors out and doing the marketing for you!

- ***Getting Smart About Shrink Smart***

[David Peters, Professor of Sociology and Extension Rural Sociologist, Iowa State University](#)

Learn how your community can continue to thrive despite depopulation. Peters has applied the shrink-smart concept to small towns to better understand the characteristics of shrinking yet thriving towns. Enhancing social capital, increasing civic engagement, and creating a culture of openness and support are all areas communities can focus on to continue thriving. Other suggestions include stabilizing agricultural employment and growing jobs in goods producing industries.

- **Pop-Up Opportunities: Supporting Entrepreneurs with Temporary Locations**

Susan Norris, Director, Pierce County Economic Development

Sandra Barerra Fuentes, Extension Educator and Latino Small Business Program leader, Rural Prosperity Nebraska

Pop-up and temporary businesses are creating opportunities for rural communities and business owners alike. Communities gain new vendors who add to the variety of foods and retail services available to residents. Businesses gain as they can test their business concept with low start-up costs by opening a temporary shop that expands their markets. Gain ideas on how communities can make this a win-win opportunity for everyone.

- **Engaging People Using Social Media**

Gena McPherson and Diana Munoz, College of Communications, Fine Arts and Media, University of Nebraska-Omaha

The UNO Social Media Lab and Nebraska Extension worked with seven communities to help increase civic engagement in the digital age. This session will share practical steps that you can utilize in your community from establishing goals to measuring your reach. Best practices in connecting to your community will be shared. Understand potential resources that your community can use to increase civic engagement.

- **We're Investing in Downtown: Take a Walk and See What's Happening! (Walking Tour)**

Scott Mueller, Columbus

Pam Discoe, Valencia Boutique

To keep downtown redevelopment vital and interesting, consider vertical mixed-use development. If your community has vacant commercial space, you'll want to take a downtown stroll with Scott to see how other entrepreneurs have brought our buildings to life. The tour will start at Frankfort Square.

- **Using Business and Education Partnerships as Workforce Development**

Kara Asmus, Affiliated Fund Development Coordinator, Nebraska Community Foundation

Doris Lux, Entrepreneurship Director, CCC-Columbus Campus

Work with schools to plant the seed of great careers available in your hometown and help students explore local jobs through business and education partnerships. The examples of the PATH job shadow program which provides awareness of hometown opportunities, and Drive for Five monthly meetings put these partnerships on display by including the Chamber, educators, and businesses. Learn about STEM-focused programs to help students achieve, learn, and create more with innovative next-gen technology.

4:30pm

Breakout Session III

Location: Local area businesses

- **Making Your Business a Destination**

Kristin Stock, Owner, Artzy Haven

How do you compete with box stores? Elevating a local small business concept to a destination convention for hundreds of participants supporting the arts. Artist and entrepreneur Kristin will be sharing her knowledge in bringing local and national artists to teach opportunities to her convention attendees. Come learn what you can do as an entrepreneurial business in today's big box world.

- ***Growing Entrepreneurship in Rural Nebraska: Results from a Statewide Report***

Dr. Josie Gatti Schafer, Director, UNO Center for Public Affairs Research

Entrepreneurship in Nebraska, a report published in 2021 used a 3-part methodology to understand the challenges and opportunities for growing entrepreneurship in Nebraska. With the lead author of the report, learn what interviewees and survey respondents said about how to grow entrepreneurship in Nebraska with a focus on rural community respondents.

- ***Engaging Community Members for Decision Making***

Susan Norris, Director, Plainview Economic Development

Marilyn Schlake, Extension Educator, Rural Prosperity Nebraska and Department of Agricultural Economics

As youth and adults, we want all voices heard and considered. How do we do this across a community? In this session, explore how communities can engage people through data gathering and focused conversations. Learn how you can drive community decision-making, create change, and build leadership capacity in your community.

- ***Capitalizing on NPPD Resources***

Nicole Sedlacek, Economic Development Manager, Nebraska Public Power District

Have you considered the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) as an economic development asset? By focusing on positioning communities, assisting with business retention and expansion, and attracting new business, NPPD offers tools and expertise for communities to capitalize upon. In this session, learn how to connect with NPPD to prepare and strengthen your community for future economic opportunities and hear examples of how partnerships with NPPD have led to economic success.

- ***Why Pursue the Idea of Downtown Living?***

Jean Van Iperen, Planning and Economic Development Coordinator, City of Columbus, NE

A strong downtown makes your city somewhere people want to live and provides culture and lifestyle choices that retain people. Discover ideas to redevelop spaces for downtown housing providing a foundation for a healthy and vibrant community and downtown economic revitalization. Learn how the City of Columbus is developing downtown as a 24/7 place to be. General community housing options may be discussed.

- ***Welcoming New Neighbors***

Karina Perez, Executive Director, Centro Hispano

Welcoming New Americans and immigrants into Nebraska communities is imperative to help meet growing workforce needs and to counter population loss. This session will introduce you to the efforts of Centro Hispano to welcome and serve the immigrant population in Columbus and explore how your community can do the same.

6:00pm

Networking Reception and Heavy Hors D'oeuvres

Location: Henry on 11th, 2521 11th St, Columbus, NE 68601

Dinner Optional and on your own – visit the excellent restaurants in the area, see welcome packet

Thursday, April 28th

- 7:30am Breakfast on your own
- 8:15am Networking Activity
Location: The Friedhof Building, 1270 27th Ave, Columbus, NE 68601
- 8:30am Keynote
Something Good in the Good Life: Game Changing Projects for Columbus and Nebraska
[Dawson Brunswick, Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce](#)
Columbus has seen significant growth over the past 10 years and continues to be one of Nebraska's flagship communities. High skill, high wage careers attract people to Columbus, but the quality-of-life Columbus provides allows them to call Columbus home. Learn more about the "Game Changing" projects that continue to increase Columbus' quality of life!
- 9:15am Breakout Session IV
Location: Local area businesses
- ***Bringing Spice to Rural Communities: Understanding the Importance of Cultural Background in Business***
[Sandra Barrera Fuentes, Nebraska Extension](#)
Global changes and natural disasters have led to the migration of people to different communities all over the world. Communities that were once fairly homogeneous are experiencing large influxes of newcomers from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. As our population becomes more culturally diverse, some cultural groups are experiencing more problems. If we learn to understand and value other cultures and to look at each other as neighbors with similar interests rather than adversaries, we will be more vested in the idea of taking better care of each other and recognize new opportunities existing and new businesses. A new influx of population creates needs for housing, retail space, and services. It creates opportunities to increase customer base and revenue for local municipalities. The building of relationships with people from different cultures, often many different cultures, is key in building diverse communities and powerful engines for communal economic growth.
 - ***Building Local Retail Capacity Using Innovative Data***
[Dawson Brunswick, Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, President](#)
[Shawn Kaskie, Extension Educator, Rural Prosperity Nebraska](#)
The Columbus Area Chamber recently engaged *Retail Strategies*; a national consultant who conducted an analysis of locally sourced spending data cross-referenced with national trends. Learn how Columbus is using this information to target potential service and retail opportunities. Additional resources for smaller communities to understand their local retail and service opportunity potential will also be shared.
 - ***Legal Considerations for Rural Entrepreneurs***
[Brett Stohs, Nebraska College of Law](#)
In addition to generating a strong business idea, understanding the market, and developing a financial plan, entrepreneurs also need to consider the legal implications of starting a business. In this session, learn how communities can connect entrepreneurs across the state of Nebraska to FREE legal resources and understand the importance of some legal topics many businesses owners may overlook.

- ***Building a Successful Start-Up Town***

Nathan Preheim, Co-Founder, Proven Ventures

Revenue is the single best commodity of your community. *Proven Ventures* helps communities with “a pronounced energy, enthusiasm and optimism” for future revenue generation. As the business co-founder, Nathan will provide entrepreneurial communities with unique forms of financing and capital in Nebraska.

- ***Marketing Hometown America***

Cheryl Burkhart Kriesel, Extension Specialist, Rural Prosperity Nebraska

Marilyn Schlake, Extension Educator, Rural Prosperity Nebraska

Community marketing is more than promotion. Its about tailoring your “product” to meet potential newcomers and current community member wants and needs. Learn how your community can use its assets of place and people to position, promote and ultimately perform as a community to attract and retain members. Hear what other rural communities in Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota are doing to market their locations as great places to live, work and play.

- ***Communities 4 Kids***

Jackie Farrell, Assistant Vice President of Early Childhood Programs, Communities for Kids

The Communities for Kids (C4K) initiative partners with communities across Nebraska to plan for and address shortages of high-quality early care and education programs—shortages that impact children’s optimal development and pose a challenge for communities hoping to attract and retain the viable workforce they need to thrive. Visit with C4K staff and Early Childhood Community Coordinators as they share their efforts to develop collaborative, community-centric, right-sized early care and education solutions.

10:45am

Breakout Session V

Location: Local area businesses

- ***Customer Service Excellence: How Businesses and Communities Can Win***

Ajai Ammachathram, Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management Program Director, College of Education and Human Sciences, UNL

Loyal repeat customers are key to the success of any operation. They represent recurring revenue and are a great source of feedback. They can also be your greatest enthusiasts, recommending your services to friends and colleagues, even giving favorable online reviews. Learn some customer service tips that can help you keep those customers coming back, time and time again.

- ***Business Transition Models: Decision Tool***

Jason Tuller, Extension Educator, Rural Prosperity Nebraska

The Grocery Store Transition Decision Tree will be shared with communities considering options for retaining their local grocery store or other essential business services. During our research we found that community leaders seeking options to retain essential businesses often have limited understanding of the business transition process and timelines involved. Often considered as a choice of last resort, multi-ownership or cooperative business formations are not fully embraced by advising professionals and business owners. We will discuss pros and cons of certain transition strategies as well as highlight some of the decisions needed to be made during the transition process.

- **Why Leadership Matters to Rural Community Vitality & Volunteering**

David Peters, Professor of Sociology and Extension Rural Sociologist, Iowa State University

What are the characteristics of good leadership in small towns? Does leadership enhance quality of life? Is leadership the difference between successful and struggling communities? These are common questions asked by residents and leaders in our small towns. Peters will share how leadership styles impact volunteering.

- **Family Entrepreneurship Succession Stories**

Masek Family, Heartland Athletic Club

Heilbusch Family, Duo-Lift Manufacturing Co Inc

Baby Boomers were the most entrepreneurial generation in American history. 52% of those baby boomers will be exiting their businesses within the next 10 years. Sustaining those family businesses from one generation to the next multiple generations is critical for the economic stability of a community. Learn how long-standing Columbus families are navigating business ownership change.

- **Developing a Tourism Destination with University Collaboration**

Lisa Tschauner, UNK Center for Entrepreneurship and Rural Development and Cultivate Student Organization

This session will feature the Cultivate Student Organization (CSO) from UNK. The advisors with the Center for Entrepreneurship and Rural Development (CERD) will give a review of the Cultivate education model and share how it was used by CSO to work with the Pioneer Village in Minden, NE as they rebuild their organization and face transition to succeed as a tourist attraction in Nebraska. Students and advisors will share the data discovered in their community and visitor input research and how this was used to build a strategy for the community and Pioneer Village.

- **How Can a Community Support Minority-Owned Businesses?**

Juan Sandavol, Associate Center Director, Nebraska Business Development Center

Veronica Reyes, Small Business Lending Specialist, Center for Rural Affairs

Over the last 10 years, minority business enterprises account for more than 50% of the two million new businesses started in the United States. Learn about their disparities, challenges, and their future while we provide tips to support our community, consumers, and businesses while contributing to economic inclusion.

12:00pm

Lunch

Location: The Friedhof Building, 1270 27th Ave, Columbus, NE 68601

Closing Session | Keynote

Keynote

Dell Gines, Lead Community Development Advisor, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

1:00pm

Conference Concludes

Thank you to our sponsors!

