

# NCSHA 2016 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

**Deadline: Wednesday, June 15, 2016**

Visit [ncsha.org/awards](http://ncsha.org/awards) to view the Annual Awards Call for Entries.

**Instructions:** Type entry information into the form and save it as a PDF. Do not write on or scan the form. If you have any questions contact [awards@ncsha.org](mailto:awards@ncsha.org) or 202-624-7710.

Fill out the entry name *exactly* as you want it listed in the program.

**Entry Name:**

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**HFA:**

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**Submission Contact:** (Must be HFA Staff Member)

**Email:**

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Please provide a 15-word (maximum) description of your nomination to appear on the NCSHA website.

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Use this header on the upper right corner of each page:

**HFA:**

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**Entry Name:**

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**Select the appropriate subcategory of your entry and indicate if you are providing visual aids.**

Communications	Homeownership	Legislative Advocacy	Management Innovation
Annual Report	Empowering New Buyers	Federal Advocacy	Financial
Creative Media	Encouraging New Production	State Advocacy	Human Resources
Promotional Materials and Newsletters	Home Improvement and Rehabilitation		Operations
			Technology
Rental Housing	Special Needs Housing	Special Achievement	Are you providing visual aids?
Encouraging New Production	Combating Homelessness	Special Achievement	Yes
Multifamily Management	Housing for Persons with Special Needs		No
Preservation and Rehabilitation			

*“What gets measured, gets managed” – Peter Drucker*

### **Background:**

The creation and use of measurements as a means to determine the state of an organization’s program needs and goals is essential to successful organizational management. Before we can define the future direction of an organization, we must first understand where the organization currently stands and where it has been in order to know the direction the organization is moving. Through the development and administration of the Nebraska Dashboard©<sup>1</sup> (the “Dashboard”) and its corresponding report, the Nebraska Profile (the “Profile”), the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) aims to help local communities, non-profits, businesses, and inter-governmental organizations answer those essential questions. The data collected and presented through the Dashboard provides a valuable resource to the decision makers in the state of Nebraska. It is a resource that is simple to use and provides unique data and analysis not available through any other source in the state.

In the not so distant past, the idea of putting a vast amount of housing and economic information online for both internal and public use was not contemplated by most government organizations. The days of highly interactive websites and widespread adoption of cloud storage were still a decade away. In 2002, NIFA commissioned the Profile of Nebraska: Demographics, Economics, and Housing<sup>2</sup> report as a resource for decision makers within the state. This report, the precursor to the Dashboard, would provide in-depth statistics, market conditions, and trend data vital to forming a complete picture of the state of Nebraska—an essential picture to help guide an organization’s activities.

The Profile has since been prepared by Western Economic Services LLC<sup>3</sup> (“WES”) of Portland, Oregon. The report is published annually and provides updated, accurate, and verifiable statistics regarding numerous factors which influence the development, production, use, and needs for housing throughout the state. The report highlights the state by region, all 93 counties, as well as the 31 largest cities. The Profile has been compiled for the last fourteen years consolidating a consistent body of data by which essential trends in the state can be analyzed.

The variety of data sources used in the Profile include: US Census / American Community Survey, Nebraska Departments of Education, Labor, Motor Vehicles, Revenue, and Property Tax & Assessment, as well as local Realtor® boards. Much of the data that the Profile presents is unique since it is not publicly available or is difficult to obtain, such as the number of surrendered and issued drivers licenses which gives insight into the age, source, and destination of drivers as they migrate in, out, and across the state. The property and tax assessment data provides updated information on the quantity, type and condition of all residential properties throughout Nebraska’s 93 counties.

### **Our Challenge:**

The Profile had been in use for nearly a decade as a resource for strategic decision-making, but was somewhat limited in usefulness due to the cumbersome task of reading through several hundred pages of reports or loading massive PDF documents over a then relatively slow fledgling internet. The Profile

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<sup>1</sup> Nebraska Dashboard© <http://www.westernes.com/Nebraska/>

<sup>2</sup> Profile of Nebraska: Demographics, Economic and Housing [http://nifa.org/programs/programs.html?pi=639&search\\_var=prog&prog\\_name\\_sent=2016+Profile+of+Nebraska](http://nifa.org/programs/programs.html?pi=639&search_var=prog&prog_name_sent=2016+Profile+of+Nebraska)

<sup>3</sup> Western Economic Services LLC, Portland, Oregon <http://westernes.com/>

## 2016 NCSHA Annual Awards for Program Excellence

HFA: Nebraska Investment Finance Authority

Category: Management Innovation - Technology

Entry Name: The Evolution of the Nebraska Dashboard©

itself, despite containing a tremendous amount of information and analysis, did not provide that data in its raw form or in a way that allows the public to use and sort the data to meet their own requirements or perform individualized strategic analysis. The Profile also lacked the ability for data to be quickly graphed, trended, or compared electronically. Any statistical analysis, beyond that done within the Profile report was nearly impossible, limiting its usefulness to those using the Profile for its well-researched and detailed data.

In order for the Profile to reach its full potential as a decision making tool, it needed to transform into one which could provide access to all of the statistics gathered since the Profile's creation. This new tool would not only provide the current Profile's data, but also data compiled throughout the history of the Profile. This would allow users to create historical data sets to make useful charts and graphs, as well as deduce critical trends in the data. This data needed to be well organized and presented so that sorting, comparing, saving, and printing was simple and effective. With these revamped capabilities, the Profile would soon become a tool capable of doing a basic housing market analysis without ever having to leave the office desk—the Nebraska Dashboard©.

### **Our Innovation:**

The first iteration and change from the Profile to the modernized Dashboard came in the form of a Windows® desktop application. In 2011, NIFA began discussions with WES to transform the Profile into a more readily useable tool for analysis. The project was named “The Nebraska Dashboard©” and its inaugural version was programmed in Python®, a simple and straightforward computer language. Initially, the Dashboard was relatively small, but it still allowed the user to perform statistical analysis quickly with respect to housing production. It soon became apparent that this type of application could do more than just analyze housing production.

Eventually, the Dashboard became a fully developed desktop application with tabs for demographics, economics, and housing, as well as updated sorting and selection capabilities. An overview option and the ability to print reports were later added. However, this application was still quite cumbersome to install on each user's machine and experienced limitations based on the type of computer used. The ultimate solution to this barrier was to take all of the data and analysis capabilities of the Dashboard and host them online.

The Dashboard began its transition to online hosting in 2013, along with its copyright. The Dashboard is hosted and maintained on WES's servers, but is easily accessible on the NIFA website. Over time, the Dashboard has evolved and gained numerous new capabilities. The ability to interactively map data and a customizable graph feature were added in 2014. Later in 2015, the Dashboard added some fun to the data with interactive bubble charts and made it easy to download data using a new export feature. Links to additional resources, partners, and data sources were also added.

In early 2016, a guided tour was added to the Dashboard allowing users to view many statistics and graphs in a presentation format with just a few clicks. New styles of graphs and data trees were added to give extra insight into the tremendous amount of data available. Looking into the future, the Dashboard will continue to evolve with new features and refine its data analysis and reporting to the public. Providing easy to access, accurate, and detailed information through the Dashboard is essential to embracing the “open data” movement within government and providing a superior database for decision making in the state of Nebraska for years to come.

## 2016 NCSHA Annual Awards for Program Excellence

HFA: Nebraska Investment Finance Authority

Category: Management Innovation - Technology

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### Our Success:

In order for the Dashboard to become a tool that organizations and the public wanted to use, it had to provide useful information and it had to do so without instructional training first, as many other online data sources recommend or require. Key data with respect to economics and housing development was gathered from across the state and was broken down so that it could be sorted by the entire state or a single region, county, or city. The Dashboard provides the ability to compare two sets of data for different geographies simultaneously, or to download data sets for all geographic areas to perform one's own analysis. A brief walkthrough of the basic functions of the Dashboard is shown in Exhibit A.

All fourteen years' worth of data in the Dashboard can be graphed or downloaded, and graphs can be printed or saved as a photo for users to incorporate into their own documents. The Dashboard has become a quick and easy tool for those wishing to find statistics for reports or completing grant applications. NIFA encourages all of its private and public partners to give the Dashboard a try the next time they need to quickly assess housing trends or perform an in-depth market analysis. The testimony of a well-known community planner on the capabilities and necessity for the Dashboard has been provided in Exhibit B.

From the Dashboard's online launch on April 23, 2013 until our most recent report on May 17, 2016, the total number of sessions in the Dashboard was 4,587 with 3,400 users. The total amount of time spent on the Dashboard was 199 hours, with average session duration of 2:36 minutes. Over this period, visitors to the Dashboard represented 47 countries, 46 U.S. states and 578 cities. Most users originated from Nebraska and Montana, with 53 percent of sessions originating from Lincoln, Omaha, Kearney and Norfolk.

Most users arrived at the Dashboard through the [www.nifa.org](http://www.nifa.org) link, followed next by directly typing in the URL, and finally by a google search. The tabs most commonly visited were the Housing, Demographics and Economics tabs. After the default tabs of population, unemployment rate and vacancy rate, the data concepts users most viewed were Employment, Market Rate Rents, and Personal Income. The geographic areas most accessed, after the default areas, were Omaha, Lincoln, and Douglas County. A total of 471 reports have been downloaded from the Dashboard as a .PDF and 71 requests to export data have been processed since 2014, when these functions were first tracked. The new interactive tour feature has been used 66 times since it went online in February 2016. More detailed website analytics for the Dashboard are shown in Exhibit C.

The initial 2013 production cost for the online version of the Dashboard was \$14,800, a small fraction of the total cost of the overall Nebraska Profile. The in-depth research and surveys performed for the Nebraska Profile including upgrades, maintenance and website hosting of the Dashboard will bring 2017's estimated cost to \$126,160, with the Dashboard cost representing only 1/5th of that total. NIFA believes this is a small price to pay for exceptionally detailed, useful data and a well-designed web portal that can be accessed by anyone worldwide.

# Nebraska Investment Finance Authority

## The Evolution of the Nebraska Dashboard©

### Supplemental Information

#### Nebraska Profile Dashboard Walkthrough

#### Exhibit A

For the sake of our walkthrough, let's assume you are a community developer in Norfolk, Nebraska. You have to be tasked to quickly pull up evidence justifying a new rental housing development in your city and compare your needs to another prosperous city in the state. Rental vacancy rate is one way to provide evidence to support your development, but where are you going to find that data quickly for your own city, and how will you compare that data to other areas? Lexington, Nebraska would make a great city to compare to, but it's the weekend and you can't get in touch with anyone in their community development office.

You remember from last year's NIFA conference that their Nebraska Profile Dashboard© has a plethora of useful data, including rental housing vacancy rates, so you navigate to [www.nifa.org](http://www.nifa.org) and find the Dashboard link on the right side of the page. To access the data you need you do the following:

1. Go to [www.nifa.org](http://www.nifa.org) and click on the NE profile dashboard button on the right.
2. Once there, the home page should look like this—note the parts of the dashboard listed.

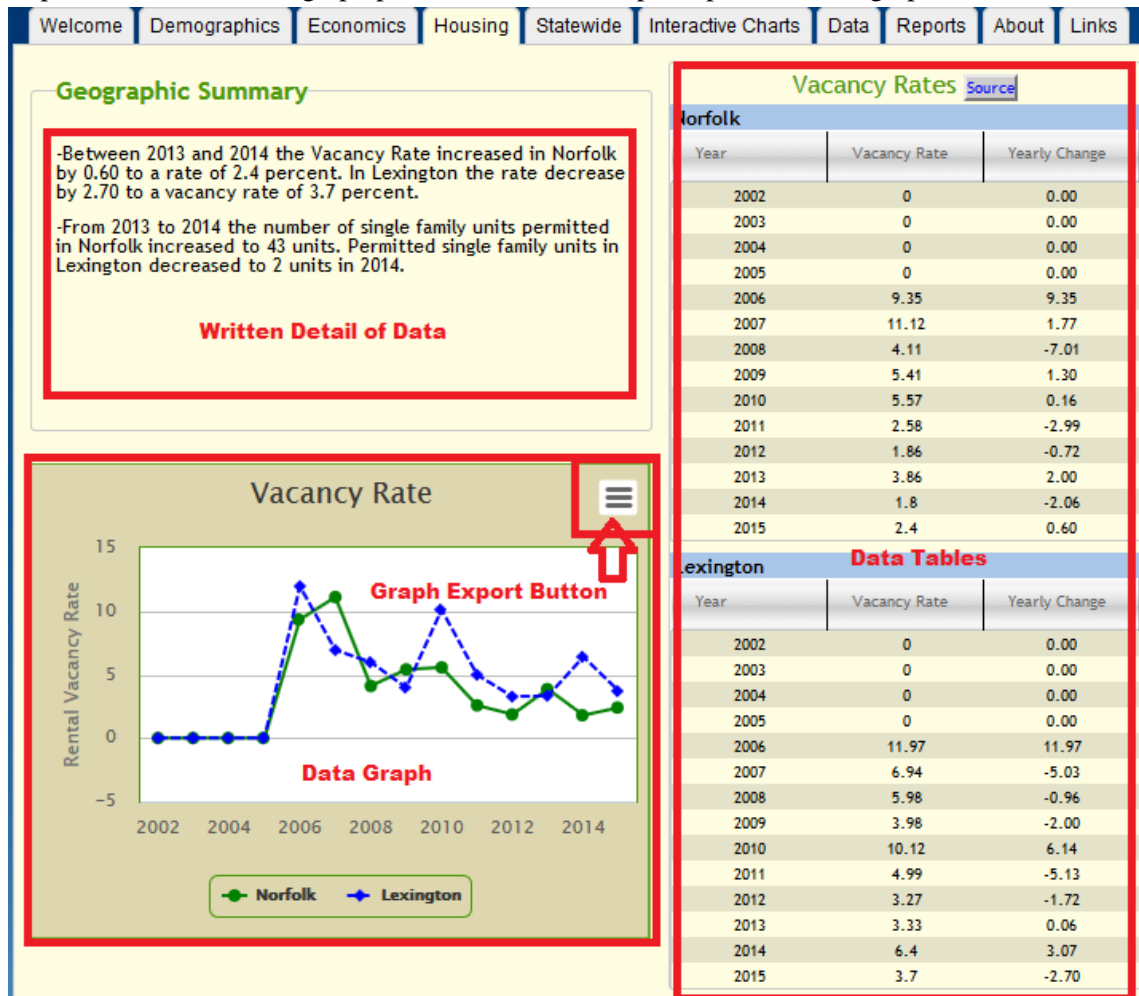
The screenshot shows the Nebraska Interactive Dashboard home page. A red box highlights the left sidebar, which contains the following sections:

- Nebraska Dashboard Controls**: Select the Areas You Wish to Examine. It includes two columns for selecting areas (Region, County, City, State) and a dropdown for Alliance (set to Nebraska).
- Select the Concepts You Wish to Examine:** Includes checkboxes for Alliance and Nebraska, and a dropdown for years (set to 2014).
- Demographics**: Includes checkboxes for Population, Race, Age, Enrollment, and Migration.
- Economics**: Includes checkboxes for Unemployment Rate, Employment, Personal Income, Avg. Earnings/Job, and HUD MFI.
- Housing**: Includes checkboxes for Vacancy Rate, Tenure, Single Family Permits, and Market Rate Rents.
- Open Profile Reports**: Includes buttons for Alliance and Nebraska, and a button for Launch Interactive Tour.

The main content area on the right is titled "Welcome to the Nebraska Interactive Dashboard" and includes a "Program Description" section. A red arrow points to the "Navigation Tabs" section, which lists the following tabs: Welcome, Demographics, Economics, Housing, Statewide, Interactive Charts, Data, Reports, About, and Links. Below the tabs, the "2016 Profile of Nebraska" section is visible, followed by "Instructions" and "Whats New?" sections. At the bottom, there are buttons for "Profile Reports and Tour" and "Display Area", with a red arrow pointing to the "Profile Reports and Tour" button.

3. In order to access the cities of Norfolk and Lexington make sure the "City" radial buttons are highlighted in the region section, and then select Norfolk and Lexington from the drop down menus.
4. You want recent data, so make sure the years listed next to the cities are the most recent (2014) in the drop down menu.
5. Next locate the "Vacancy Rate" radial button in the data selection section. It may already be highlighted, but if you click it, it will take you to the vacancy data page right away.

- The search returns three variations of displaying the same data: a short narrative description of the data, a line graph of the data spanning several years, and a data table. Note, the small Graph Export button on the bar graph provides additional export options for the graph.



- You can now click on the Graph Export Button to save a copy of the graph in various formats, or use the “Data” navigation tab at the top of the page to save data into an Excel file.
- For additional information, you can click on the Profile Access Buttons (on the bottom left of the page) to read in-depth reports about each city which contain a wealth of information, including data gathered exclusively for the Nebraska Profile Dashboard.
- New this Year: An in-depth interactive tour is available for users to launch which displays information on their selected geographic areas.

With your graphical rental vacancy data in hand, you speak to the concerned parties about the very low rental housing vacancy rates in Norfolk, Nebraska compared to that of Lexington. Valuable data regarding population trends, job growth and much more is also available. What you do with the rest of the data is up to you!



# HANNA:KEELAN ASSOCIATES, P.C.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING & RESEARCH

PRINCIPALS:

Becky J. Hanna  
Timothy M. Keelan

**Exhibit B**

May 29, 2015

Mr. Ted Simpson  
Director of Development  
Nebraska Investment Finance Authority  
1625 Farnam Street, Suite 750  
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

Re: Nebraska Investment Finance Authority  
Nebraska Interactive Dash Board

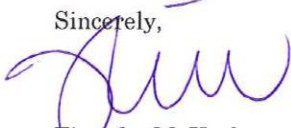
Dear Ted,

Hanna:Keelan Associates is a Community Planning and Research Consulting Firm located in Lincoln, Nebraska. The Firm has completed 400+ housing studies and 160+ comprehensive plans and over 1,200 total planning projects during our 37 year existence. Each of these planning activities require extensive research of the local demographic, economic and housing components to insure the proper vision and implementation program for Communities and Counties. Hanna:Keelan utilizes the **Nebraska Interactive Dashboard**, provided by the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, as a tool to assist us in our planning research efforts. *This letter serves to endorse the Nebraska Interactive Dashboard as an important and needed research tool.*

The Nebraska Interactive Dashboard serves Hanna:Keelan in many facets of our planning research efforts. The availability and ease of accessibility to demographic, economic and housing data is important not only to consultants and community planners, but to local governments and the general public. The ability to compare data sets among Cities, Counties or Regions is important to know how and where growth is occurring in different parts of the State of Nebraska. Charts and illustrations provided by the Interactive Dashboard allow for an additional way to communicate data to local citizenry.

We consider the Dashboard to be an unique and important tool for reliable, accurate information regarding cities, counties and regions in the State of Nebraska.

Sincerely,



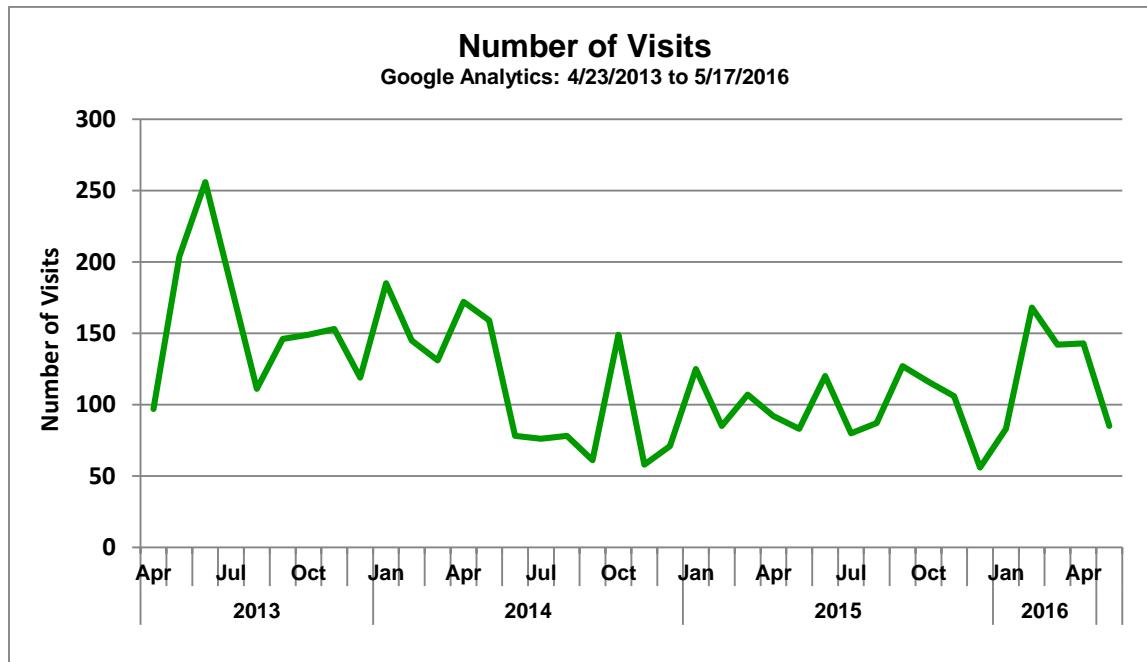
Timothy M. Keelan  
Principal Partner  
Hanna:Keelan Associates, P.C.

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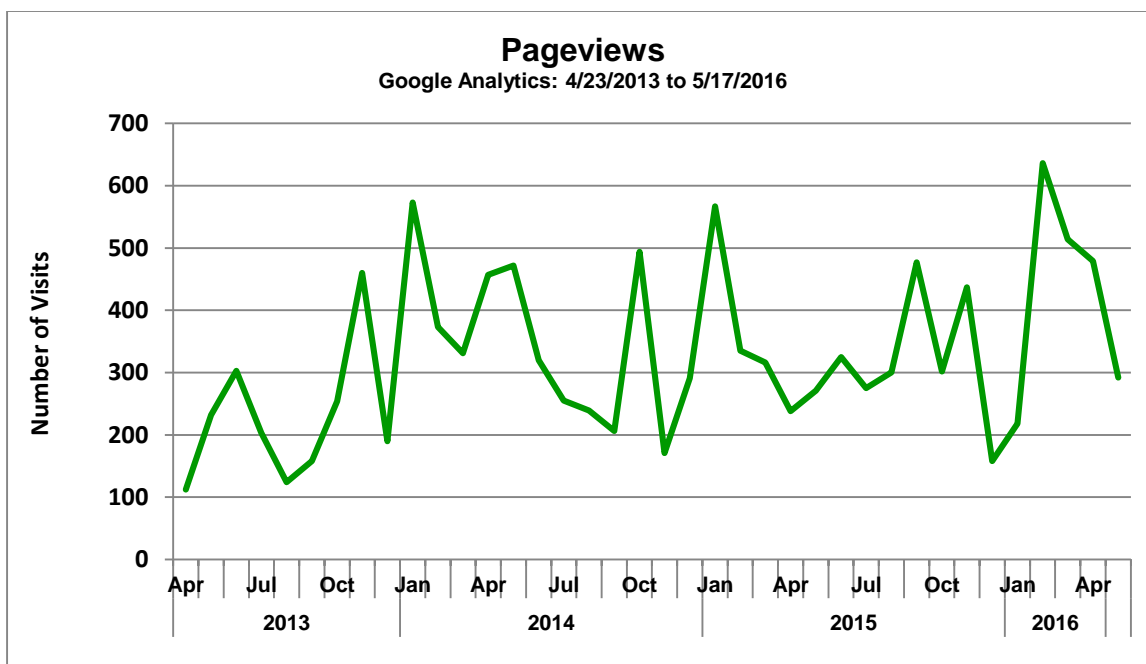
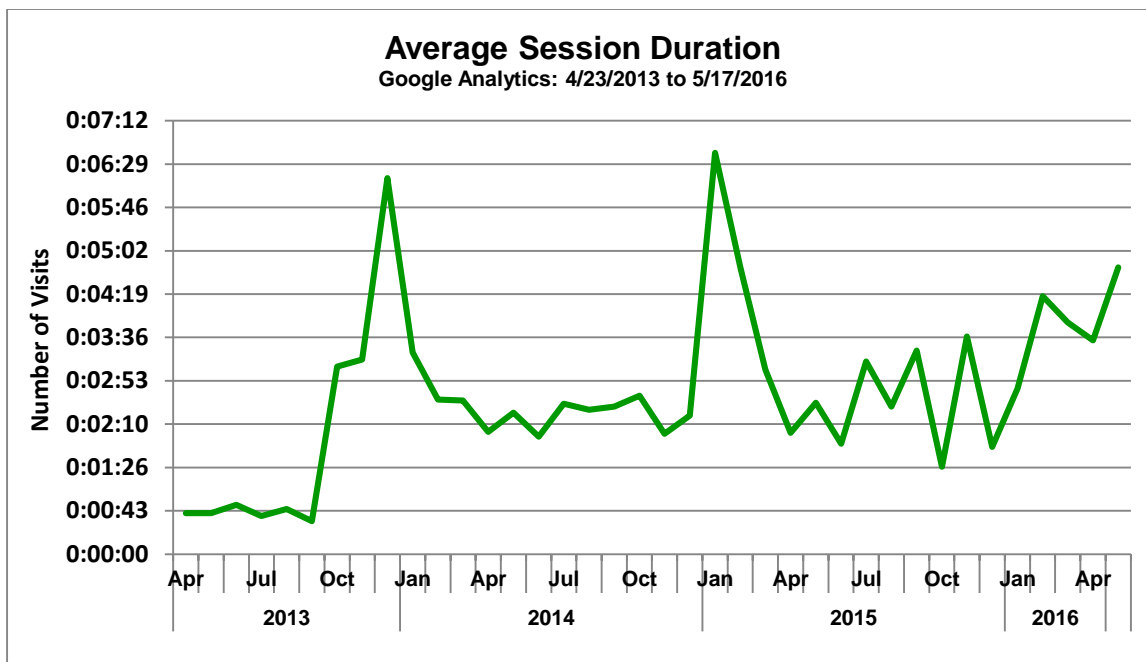
3275 HOLDREGE STREET • P.O. BOX 30552 • LINCOLN, NE 68503-0552  
OFFICE • (402) 464-5383 • FAX (402) 464-5856 • website: [www.hannakeelan.com](http://www.hannakeelan.com)

**Exhibit C**

<b>NIFA Dashboard Summary</b>	
Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/17/2016	
Category	Value
Number of Sessions	4,587
Number of Users	3,400
Number of New Visitors (sessions)	74.00%
Average Time on Site	0:02:36
Total Time on Site	199:00:14
Most Common Browser	Internet Explorer (44.84%)







Where Dashboard Users Reside (Top 25)			
Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/17/2016			
City	Number of Sessions	Average Session Duration	Pages/Session
Lincoln	984	0:03:34	3.15
Helena	820	0:01:32	1.22
Omaha	680	0:02:49	2.9
Kearney	83	0:02:38	2.35
Norfolk	57	0:06:30	3.75
Washington	43	0:02:48	2.84
Grand Island	43	0:03:13	1.81
Bellevue	38	0:04:31	3.68
Minneapolis	37	0:01:46	2.73
Scottsbluff	37	0:03:47	2.65
Sioux Falls	36	0:02:37	2.25
Missoula	33	0:03:40	5.03
North Platte	31	0:04:39	3.71
Columbus	30	0:04:16	4.9
Grant	28	0:08:09	5.18
Sioux City	25	0:01:01	2.72
Des Moines	23	0:01:08	3.96
Lexington	23	0:04:32	2.26
Indianapolis	22	0:02:59	6.27
New York	22	0:03:21	2.86
Sweet Home	20	0:03:18	3.3
Salem	19	0:02:11	4.37
San Francisco	18	0:01:02	2.56
Bozeman	18	0:00:08	1.17
Chicago	17	0:03:21	2

Page Views		
Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/17/2016		
Page	Pageviews	Average Time on Page
Nebraska	5,272	0:02:37
Housing	1,257	0:01:40
Demographics	1,056	0:00:59
Economics	997	0:00:47
Interactive Mapping	577	0:01:16
Statewide	570	0:00:40
Information	483	0:01:03
About	325	0:00:36
Export	312	0:02:22
Reporting Tab	190	0:01:59
Links	169	0:00:51
Alternate Dashboards (Beta, I.E.)	1,150	.
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,358</b>	<b>0:02:11</b>

<b>How Dashboard Users Got to the Dashboard</b> Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/17/2016		
Source / Medium	Visits	Average Visit Duration
nifa.org / referral	2,271	0:03:03
(direct) / (none)	1,564	0:01:58
google / organic	377	0:02:37
nestats.org / referral	217	0:01:55
apiforum.ideascale.com / referral	38	0:01:24
bing / organic	28	0:08:47
ceic.maps.arcgis.com / referral	18	0:04:14
forum.topic40388201.darodar.com / referral	18	0:01:33
sdcclearinghouse.wordpress.com / referral	11	0:02:22
nifa.vipa.tv / referral	5	0:00:00
google.com / referral	4	<00:00:01
yahoo / organic	4	0:04:39
nifa.vipasuite.com / referral	3	0:05:07
prezi.com / referral	3	0:05:22
search.yahoo.com / referral	3	0:00:04
google.de / referral	2	0:00:01
l.facebook.com / referral	2	0:01:55
m.facebook.com / referral	2	0:00:38
mail.centurylink.net / referral	2	0:02:04
mail.hannakeelan.com / referral	2	0:06:39
aol / organic	1	0:00:00
bing.com / referral	1	0:08:33
censusoldcomm.ideascale.com / referral	1	0:00:08
facebook.com / referral	1	0:08:19
images.google.fr / referral	1	0:00:01
nifa.biz / referral	1	0:00:00
search-results / organic	1	0:00:00
search.pch.com / referral	1	0:00:00
search.xfinity.com / referral	1	0:00:00
testing / referral	1	0:00:15
webmail.megavision.com / referral	1	0:00:00
westernes.com / referral	1	0:00:00
wyomingcda.com / referral	1	0:00:06
	<b>4,587</b>	<b>0:02:36</b>