

NCSHA 2015 Annual Awards Entry Form

(Complete one form for each entry)

Deadline: Wednesday, June 10, 2015

Visit 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 Matt Cunningham at mcunningham@ncsha.org or 202-624-5424.

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

Entry Name:

HFA:

Submission Contact: (Must be HFA Staff Member)

 Email:

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

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

HFA:

Entry Name:

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			

2015 NCSHA Annual Awards for Program Excellence

HFA: Nebraska Investment Finance Authority

Entry Name: Nebraska Profile Report – Creating the
Interactive “Nebraska Dashboard©”

“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest”

Benjamin Franklin

Background

For many years, the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) has been privileged to assist and partner with various Nebraska constituencies, including communities, counties, and other political subdivisions, for-profit and non-profit developers, et al. in addressing their housing needs, challenges and opportunities. This assistance includes the typical financial programs, both federal and state that we and other HFA’s were created to deploy and manage but it also frequently includes responding to a wide range of “technical assistance” questions ranging from “we need housing-we think?” – “but what type(s) of housing do we need?” to “how do we go about creating housing?” and “what information do we have or need to get started?”

In 2002, NIFA commissioned and debuted the Profile of Nebraska: Demographics, Economics and Housing¹ (*Profile*) in response to those questions. We recognized that undertaking analysis and making informed decisions on housing wants and needs, and subsequent funding decisions, requires a solid initial knowledge base. It is important to have an understanding of **both the existing conditions and of the trending** of demographics, economics, housing stock and utilization thereof. Only with accurate information is one able to reconcile housing wants and needs to the realities of existing conditions, capacity and resources and justify investment based upon the trends occurring in these areas.

Prepared by Western Economic Services LLC² of Portland, Oregon (WES) and published annually by NIFA since 2002, the *Profile* provides current, verifiable, relevant data about factors influencing the development, production, use, and need for housing on a statewide, by county (93) and for 31 of the largest cities in the state. With thirteen years of data, the *Profile* provides valuable insight into trends within these categories. Data from various sources impacting housing is compiled and reported including data from the US Census/ACS, BLS, the Nebraska Departments of Education, Labor, Motor Vehicles, Revenue, and Property Tax & Assessment (PTA), as well as from local Realtor® boards. Much of the data collected is unique to the *Profile*, such as the number of surrenders and new issues of drivers licenses, which provides insight into where people, identified by ages, are leaving for or from where they are arriving (migration patterns). The PTA provides updated data from all 93 county assessors on the number, type, condition, and estimated valuation of all residential real property on an annual basis. A unique and important component of the *Profile* related to housing statistics is the annual Rental Vacancy Survey (RVS) which is conducted as part of the *Profile*. In 2014, owners and/or property managers of 2,517 rental properties statewide representing 119,700 individual rental units completed the RVS via personal interviews. Survey questions important to housing decision makers include soliciting views of those surveyed on the various local market conditions and including their opinion of “over or under supply” of various types of units at various price points. This has proven to be an important barometer of assessing rental housing needs in the state.

Challenge

Published on NIFA’s website, the *Profile* now has thirteen years of historical information and contains over 3,000 pages of data, tables, graphs and interpretive analysis and narrative. However, we were well aware that, while an excellent resource and reference for many applications, it does take considerable

¹ *Profile of Nebraska: Demographics, Economic and Housing*
http://nifa.org/programs/programs.html?pi=639&search_var=prog&prog_name_sent=2015+Profile+of+Nebraska

² Western Economic Services LLC, Portland, Oregon <http://westernes.com/>

2015 NCSHA Annual Awards for Program Excellence

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time and commitment to peruse all three volumes of the *Profile* in order to extract specific data. More significantly, the data was static, and thus cumbersome to integrate and manipulate into comparative analysis of one area or community to another (i.e. city to county, city to city, or county to statewide).

Our challenge was to create a “tool” that would make access to, and the utility of, this valuable historic data available in a simple, easy to organize and use format and medium. Key requirements were that, on a customized and comparative basis, the data could be sorted, charted and/or graphed, and printable electronically.

Innovation

In 2011, NIFA staff initiated a discussion with WES, our *Profile* contractor, exploring ideas of how to increase the utility of the vast data base contained in the *Profile*. From the resulting conversations, the concept of the Nebraska Dashboard©³ (*Dashboard*) was conceived. WES was then engaged to develop the *Dashboard* for NIFA. The first version, programmed in Python® as a Windows® desktop application, was a small application where the end user could adjust various assumptions in a statistical model and see the resulting change in housing unit production for both rental units and homeowner units. It was quickly recognized that the application’s potential as an on-line informational tool and its ability to act as an interactive companion to the 3,000 page *Profile* was profound.

Full development commenced with the second generation *Dashboard*, also programmed in Python® as a Windows® desktop application, which added “tabs” to separate the demographic, economic and housing data, an updated control panel, sortable tables, a new statewide “Overview tab” to offer additional analysis and very significantly, a printing function (for reports).

As noted above, these first operational versions of the *Dashboard* were limited to run on Windows® computers and required the user to install the application on their individual machines. For various reasons, to include the user’s machine limitations, WES and NIFA, wanting to provide the end user with the easiest possible experience, recoded the *Dashboard* into a web-based application and it was born into its modern day form in April 2013. The *Dashboard* was copyrighted in 2013 and is hosted on WES’s servers but accessed seamlessly and exclusively from NIFA’s website.

The 2014 generation of the *Dashboard* added interactive mapping capabilities as well as additional data concepts to mirror the increase in data available in the *Profile*. Also, interactive and movable diagrams were added and became an increasingly important component of the *Dashboard*.

The 2015 generation of the *Dashboard* increases the feature set even further, with interactive bubble charts, a data export tab and a “links” section to additional resources, for example data from the Nebraska Department of Labor was linked in the 2015 update.

We are planning that the next version of the *Dashboard*, tentatively scheduled for release in January 2016, will include even more features, such as an interactive presentation with a variety of new charts and diagrams designed to enhance user experience. The 2016 *Dashboard*, originally intended as an online companion for the *Profile*, will display data in a way not possible in traditional print media.

³ Nebraska Dashboard© <http://www.westernes.com/Nebraska/>

Success

The *Dashboard* allows the user to quickly navigate by geographic location (region, county, city) to specific key data contained in the *Profile* with the added capability to compare exact data points side by side to other geographic locations (regions, county, city). Navigational tools and controls allow the user to define and customize the search. To demonstrate trends, data tables, charts and comparative graphs may be accessed to present data for all years covered by the thirteen years of *Profile*. An added feature is the ability to print the graphs and charts and/or export/download them in various formats enabling their insertion into documents created by the user. These utility features are important for users creating various kinds of reports or completing different types of grant applications. **Take a test drive “Walkthrough” of the *Dashboard* at Exhibit C!** As Mikey said about Life® cereal... “try it...you’ll like it!”

From Goggle Analytics (See Exhibit B for details):

From inception on April 23, 2013 thru May 21, 2015, the total number of sessions in *Dashboard* was 3,243, with 2,394 users. The total amount of time spent on the *Dashboard* was 127 hours and 42 minutes, with average session duration of 2:22 minutes. Over this period, visitors at *Dashboard* represented 24 countries, 46 U.S. states and 378 cities. Most users originated from Nebraska and Montana, with 37.1 percent of sessions originating from Lincoln, Omaha, Kearney and Norfolk.

Most users arrived at the *Dashboard* through the www.nifa.org link, followed by directly typing in the URL, and then by a google search. The tabs most commonly visited were the Housing, Demographics and Economics tabs. After the default population, unemployment rate and vacancy rate, the data concepts users most viewed were Personal Income, Employment and Market Rate Rents. The areas most accessed, after the default Nebraska and North Central region were Adams County and the cities of Alliance, Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska.

There were a total of 68 reports downloaded from the *Dashboard* as a .PDF, with 20 requests to export data. However, metrics on these features were only recently implemented so these figures underestimate the actual values for these features.

The initial 2013 production cost for the *Dashboard* was \$14,800. The upgrades and maintenance cost for 2015 is \$13,941. The *Profile* cost for 2015, with its extensive research, data collection and telephone survey work for the RVS data, was \$95,057.

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HANNA:KEELAN ASSOCIATES, P.C.
COMMUNITY PLANNING & RESEARCH

PRINCIPALS:

Becky J. Hanna
Timothy M. Keelan

Exhibit A

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

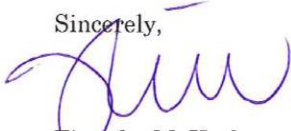
Dear Ted,

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.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS & ZONING • HOUSING MARKET RESEARCH & STUDIES • HUMAN SERVICES PLANNING
DOWNTOWN, NEIGHBORHOOD & REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING • CONSULTANTS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS
STATE & FEDERAL GRANT WRITING & ADMINISTRATION

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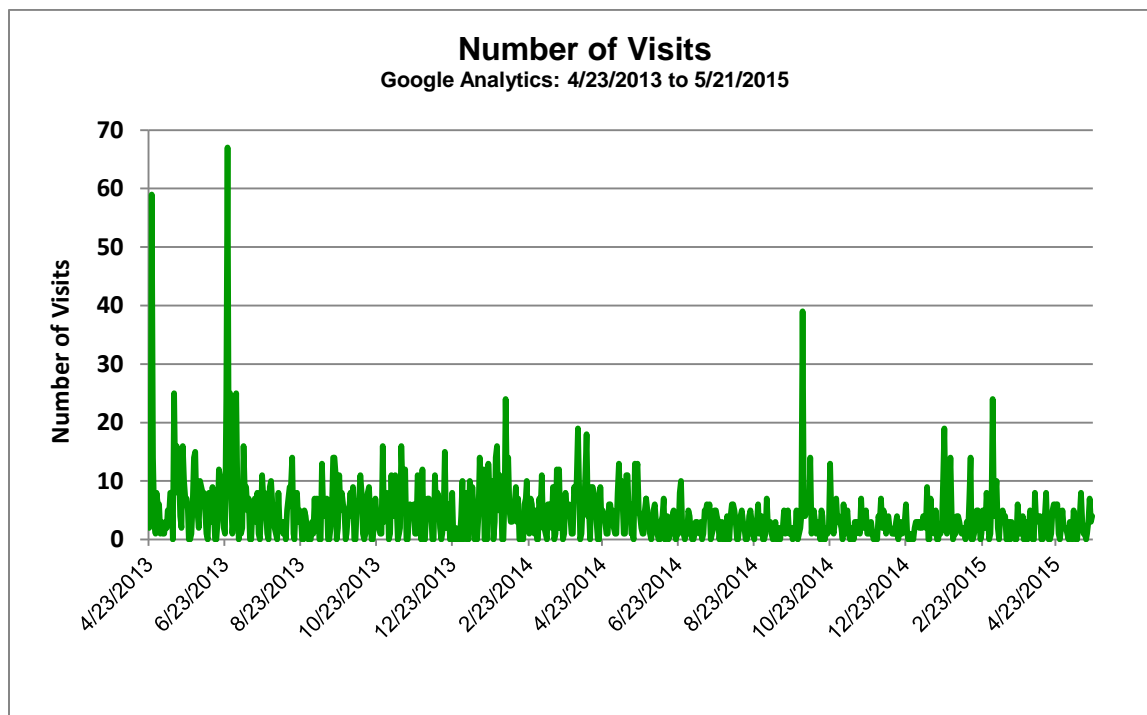
2015 NCSHA Annual Awards for Program Excellence

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Entry Name: Nebraska Profile Report – Creating the
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Exhibit B

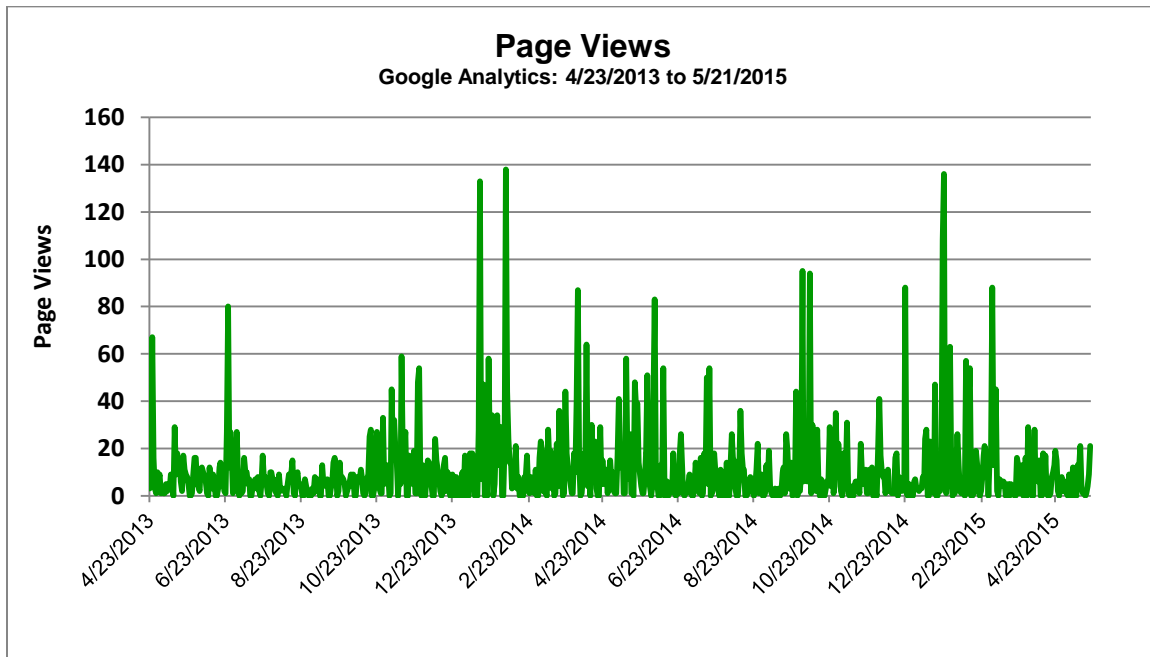
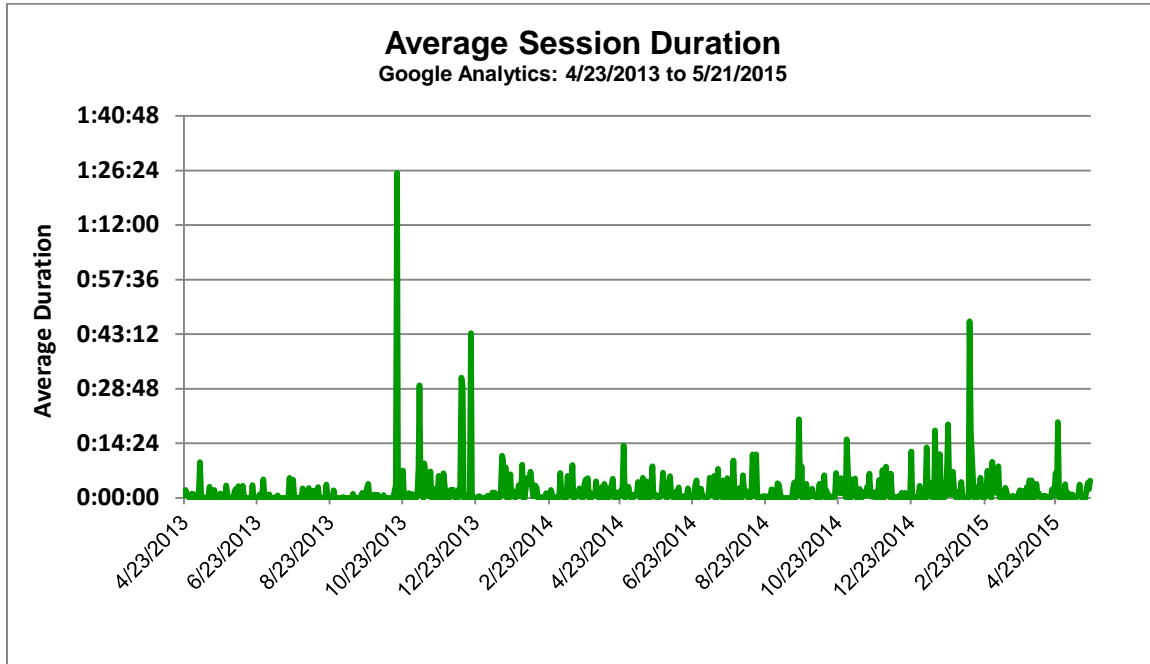
NIFA Dashboard Summary	
Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/21/2015	
Category	Value
Number of Sessions	3,243
Number of Users	2,394
Number of Returning Visitors (sessions)	26.20%
Average Time on Site	0:02:22
Total Time on Site	127:55:06
Most Common Browser	Internet Explorer (50.9%)



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Where Dashboard Users Reside (Top 25)

Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/21/2015

City	Number of Sessions	Average Session Duration	Page Views
Helena	817	0:01:31	1.2
Lincoln	661	0:03:18	2.76
Omaha	430	0:02:27	2.3
Kearney	67	0:02:36	2.22
Norfolk	45	0:04:21	2.69
Missoula	33	0:03:40	5.03
Washington	33	0:01:48	2.42
Grand Island	30	0:02:06	1.6
Columbus	29	0:04:21	4.69
Scottsbluff	24	0:03:55	2.75
Minneapolis	23	0:00:29	1.91
Indianapolis	22	0:02:59	6.27
Sweet Home	20	0:03:18	3.3
Salem	19	0:02:11	4.37
Sioux Falls	18	0:03:20	3.06
Moscow	18	0:01:35	1.28
Wayne	16	0:07:02	1.94
San Francisco	15	0:01:14	2.87
Baton Rouge	15	0:00:02	1.13
Lexington	14	0:05:22	2
Des Moines	13	0:01:31	5.23
Nairobi	13	0:00:00	1
Kansas City	12	0:02:24	3.17
McCook	12	0:00:42	2.58
Fremont	12	0:00:22	2

Where Dashboard Users Reside (Top 25)

Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/21/2015

City	Number of Sessions	Average Session Duration	Page Views
Champaign	2	2:06:53	2.5
Portage	1	0:38:08	17
Tehran	1	0:14:03	2
Tillamook	1	0:13:47	11
Tallahassee	6	0:11:57	17.5
Lynn	1	0:11:24	5
Beaverton	1	0:10:31	20
Sunnyvale	2	0:08:33	1.5
Temecula	8	0:08:08	0.75
Auburn	1	0:07:05	15
Wayne	16	0:07:02	1.94
West Palm Beach	1	0:06:39	9
Anaheim	1	0:06:03	8
South Portland	2	0:06:00	3
Clayton	3	0:05:51	10.67
Winter Springs	2	0:05:29	2
Geneva	1	0:05:25	2
Lexington	14	0:05:22	2
Corpus Christi	1	0:05:13	9
Islandia	1	0:04:54	19
Shenandoah	1	0:04:39	9
Blair	7	0:04:33	1.57
Norfolk	45	0:04:21	2.69
Columbus	29	0:04:21	4.69
Aurora	1	0:04:21	2

Page Views

Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/21/2015

Page	Page Views	Average Time on Page
Nebraska	3,646	0:03:12
Housing	686	0:01:51
Demographics	570	0:00:50
Economics	527	0:00:45
Interactive Mapping	410	0:01:07
Statewide	369	0:00:46
Information	293	0:00:59
About	204	0:00:53
Static Map	154	0:00:15
Export	86	0:04:02
Links	55	0:00:31
Alternate Dashboards (Beta, I.E.)	791	.
Total	7,791	0:02:22

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How Dashboard Users Got to the Dashboard		
Google Analytics: 4/23/2013 to 5/21/2015		
Source / Medium	Visits	Average Visit Duration
nifa.org / referral	1,495	0:02:45
(direct) / (none)	1,384	0:01:52
google / organic	231	0:02:07
apiforum.ideascale.com / referral	33	0:01:35
forum.topic40388201.darodar.com / referral	18	0:01:33
bing / organic	16	0:14:26
ceic.maps.arcgis.com / referral	12	0:03:54
sdcclearinghouse.wordpress.com / referral	11	0:02:22
nifa.vipa.tv / referral	5	0:00:00
google.com / referral	4	<00:00:01
nestats.org / referral	4	0:00:12
nifa.vipasuite.com / referral	3	0:05:07
prezi.com / referral	3	0:05:22
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
bing.com / referral	1	0:08:33
censusoldcomm.ideascale.com / referral	1	0:00:08
facebook.com / referral	1	0:08:19
nifa.biz / referral	1	0:00:00
search-results / organic	1	0:00:00
search.pch.com / referral	1	0:00:00
testing / referral	1	0:00:15
webmail.megavision.com / referral	1	0:00:00
wyomingcda.com / referral	1	0:00:06
yahoo / organic	1	0:00:00
Total	3,239	0:02:22

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Nebraska Dashboard Walkthrough

Exhibit C

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 we going to find that data quickly from your own city, and how will we find that data for other areas? Lexington, Nebraska would make a great city to compare to, but it’s the weekend and you can’t get ahold of anyone in their 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 go on over to www.nifa.org and find the Nebraska Dashboard link on the left side of the page. To access the data you need, you do the following.

1. Go to www.nifa.org and click on the NE profile dashboard link on the left.
2. Once there the home page should look like this; note the parts of the dashboard listed.

The screenshot shows the Nebraska Interactive Dashboard interface. On the left is the 'Nebraska Dashboard Controls' sidebar, and on the right is the main 'Welcome to the Nebraska Interactive Dashboard' area. Red boxes and arrows highlight specific features:

- Nebraska Dashboard Controls:** A sidebar on the left containing selection menus for areas (Region, County, City, State), concepts (Alliance, Year), demographics, economics, and housing data.
- Navigation Tabs:** A horizontal bar at the top with links: Welcome, Demographics, Economics, Housing, Statewide, Interactive Charts, Data Download, About, and More Info.
- Program Description:** A central text area titled '2015 Profile of Nebraska' describing the report's purpose and contents.
- Instructions:** A section titled 'Whats New?' providing related information and download links.
- Display Area:** The main content area on the right, containing the program description and instructions.
- Profile Access Buttons:** Buttons at the bottom of the controls sidebar labeled 'Alliance' and 'Alliance'.

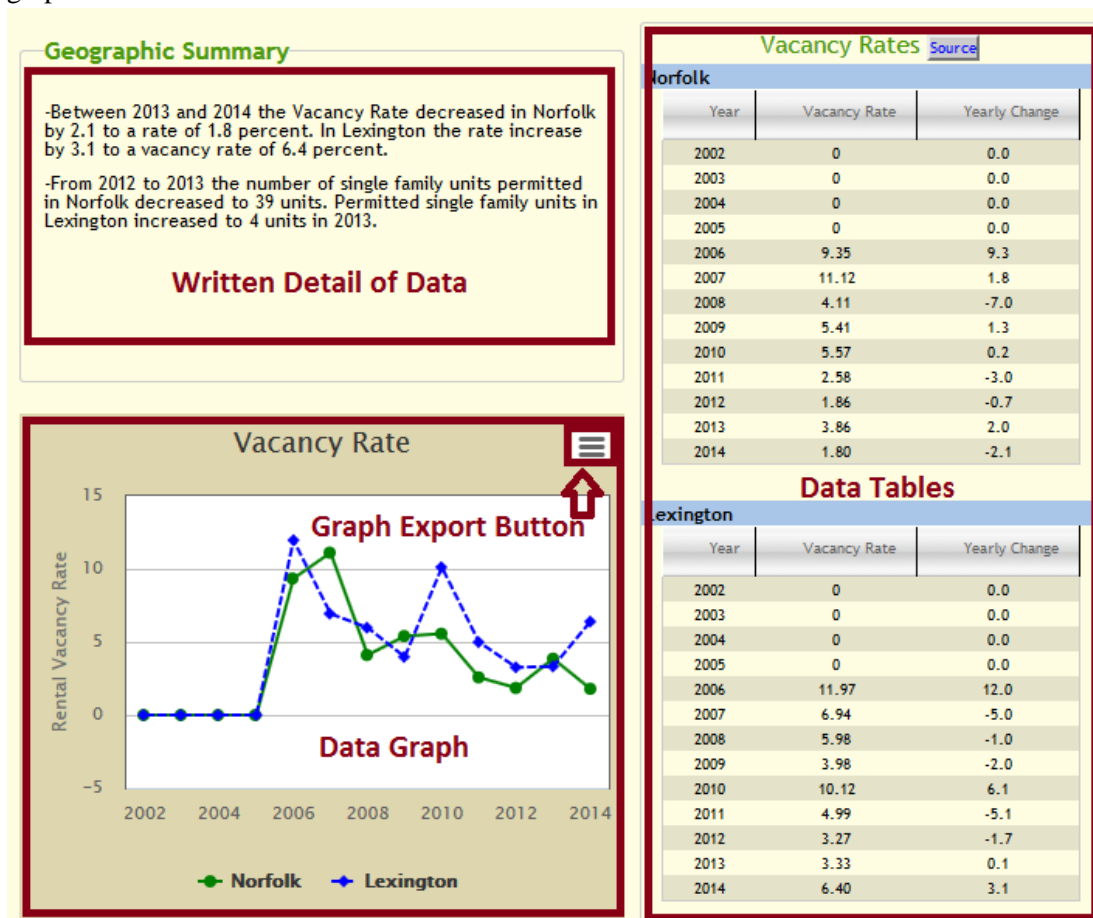
3. You want to access the cities of Norfolk and Lexington, so make sure the “City” buttons are highlighted in the region selection, and then select Norfolk and Lexington from the drop down menus.
4. You want recent data, so make sure the years listed next to the cities are the most recent (2013) in the drop down menu.
5. Next locate the Vacancy Rate 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.

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6. In the Display Area, three versions of the data are displayed. A short description of the data is written, the data is displayed on a graph over time, and the data is also displayed in tables on the right. Note the small Graph Export button on the graphical data; it contains export options for the graph.



7. You can now click on the Graph Export Button to save a copy of the graph in various formats, or use the “Data Download” navigation tab at the top of the page to save data into an excel file.
8. 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, containing a wealth of information, including data gathered exclusively for the Nebraska Profile Dashboard.

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