

Connection is Key

Nebraska Investment Finance Authority

Communications: Integrated Campaign

HFA Staff Contact

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Connection is Key!

The role of a State Housing Finance Agency can be exciting and challenging - especially when an agency works with housing and agribusiness, as is the case with the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA). The role we play in helping people find solutions depends on us being present, listening and learning in community meetings and more. A key part of our role in the state of Nebraska is finding connection points, encouraging ideation and fostering creativity. Maintaining the synergy within our industries of interest is key and in many instances, the connection point is NIFA.

NIFA's partnership with many organizations and our drive to actively listen to their needs have allowed us to help community members find and work toward their own solutions. Public meetings, community listening sessions and in-person networking events were a way to create the collaboration needed to find those solutions. However, the pandemic in 2020 created a new challenge: how do we foster innovation in a collaborative environment while working from home?

Adapt and Overcome

Each year at our annual Housing Innovation Marketplace conference, we bring our partners together to celebrate, learn from each other, and collaborate on future projects. All that changed in early 2020 when we, like everyone else, had to make the decision to postpone and eventually cancel both our 2020 and 2021 in-person events. The staff at NIFA gathered virtually and made the decision that instead of bringing Nebraska to our conference, we would bring our conference to Nebraska. With the knowledge that maintaining connectivity to our customers and partners is essential, we needed to determine how to keep our partners and end users engaged and participatory while remaining solutions-oriented. We did this by holding weekly webinars, something we had never done before.

NIFA staff moved to home offices but did not skip a beat, embracing their new virtual reality. The amount of time we spent collaborating with partners actually increased because travel was no longer part of the equation. What began as adaptation out of necessity evolved into new skill sets. Since going virtual, NIFA's Community Engagement team recognized that we have a bigger reach now than ever before. We were able to spread throughout the year what otherwise would have been compressed into a few days. Our virtual presence allowed us to devote more time to each topic, and as a bonus, our participants and staff saved time on travel and expenses.

The first challenge in establishing a weekly webinar series was selecting the topics. We wanted subject matter that would be relatable but would also educate and inspire. Our partners stretch far and wide across Nebraska and through our many strong, long-term relationships, we know that:

- Continuum of Care partners are working to prevent and end homelessness
- Developers are concerned with the cost of construction and challenges forming their capital stack to create affordable housing
- Entrepreneurial young farmers and ranchers are looking at ways to turn their farming aspirations into actual careers, even while established farmers are still recovering from the 2019 floods
- State corrections staff and advocates are concerned about prison overcrowding and helping the formerly incarcerated find homes and successfully reenter society
- Lenders and realtors are building partnerships and helping first-time homeowners realize their dreams



- LIHTC partners are looking for ways to keep tenants successfully housed, prevent eviction and maintain their operations through rental revenue

Pre-pandemic, the Community Engagement team met with department heads to brainstorm potential session topics for our in-person events and the ideas presented meant to highlight NIFA programs or those of close partners. Because of the pandemic and our shift to a webinar platform, our process has become much more dynamic. At the conclusion of every webinar, we survey our participants and request feedback, and suggestions for upcoming webinar topics and speakers. NIFA staff review and respond to all of the feedback we receive weekly. Additionally, the topic suggestions provided through the surveys allow us to improve the webinars and continue to offer information that is meaningful to our participants. Coordinating in-person conference panels that feature experts from across the state as well as country, takes considerable planning and time to execute properly. Since moving to the webinar format, we have been able to respond quickly to audience suggestions and schedule speakers with much less notice than was previously possible due to travel and scheduling.

In March of 2019, we had 34 videos on NIFA's YouTube channel that spanned a little over nine years. In the 13 months since then, we have recorded 64 webinars that are available on our website and YouTube channel. NIFA now has a total of 98 videos and counting.

Technology has been the lift that we needed. Our webinars have made a tremendous impact in educating our existing partner organizations and introducing us to new partners across the spectrum. Our 2019 conference and in-person networking events had 1,598 attendees. Since adopting a digital format, we had 2,389 people participate in our 2020 webinar series—an increase of almost 800 people! The average attendance per webinar has been 80 people. Our investment in our webinars has been \$0 because we already had a software platform and all marketing was done digitally, in-house.

The total cost for our in-person 2019 Housing Innovation Marketplace, LIHTC Compliance Training, Lender Training and community meetings was just over \$38,800. Our annual conference alone required a per person registration fee of \$175 to offset the cost of the event. Considering that our webinars are free, it is clear that the benefits of going virtual are universal.

Responding to Current Needs and Creating Relevant Topics

Property Manager – Special Edition

The roles of property managers and landlords are complicated and require a lot of multitasking. Balancing structural and individual needs can be challenging, so we created the Property Manager Special Edition webinar series to address them specifically. While the webinars were open to the public as well, the topics of interest allowed us to address the challenges of managing multi-family units. Our goal was to increase property manager and landlords' knowledge base of community resources and foster empathy towards the struggles that their tenants face. NIFA's goal was to increase housing retention and tenant tenure while keeping revenue streams flowing for landlords.

A short "commercial" video was created to promote and draw interest from the targeted audience. The four initial topics were: domestic violence, human trafficking, tenant behavior and eviction prevention.

Federal Coronavirus Relief Funding

In 2020, Nebraska received CARES funding that was divided amongst many agencies across the state. While NIFA was not a recipient of that funding, we quickly took action in order to distribute this information to the citizens of Nebraska and provide technical assistance, guidance, networking and collaboration to the agencies who received the funds. We interviewed agencies that received CARES dollars for housing needs and created “CARES Convos”, short videos that highlighted the agencies while promoting the work they do to help people in need. We interviewed nine agencies that focused on a variety of housing-related needs. The “CARES Convos” recordings were then shared on our website and across our social media platforms.

COVID-19 Impact on the Nebraska Rental Market

Every year Western Economic Services (WES) completes a survey with property managers in Nebraska as part of the NIFA Profile of Nebraska and Dashboard. As we were assessing the 2020 survey, we worked with WES staff to expand the questions to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nebraska’s rental housing market. The 2020 Survey of Rental Properties asked property managers to report on how the pandemic has affected their properties and tenants. We added the following questions specific to the pandemic: “Do you have any units that are behind on rent due to the COVID - 19 pandemic?”, “Do you expect any tenants to face eviction over the coming months due to the COVID-19 pandemic?”, “Are you currently offering a decrease in rent due to COVID-19 pandemic?”

To distribute this valuable and timely report, we linked it with our webinar series and CARES Convos. NIFA created a special “CARES Convos” interview with Legal Aid of Nebraska where they provided an update on evictions throughout the state and included the report in our marketing materials and social media platforms.

2021 Emergency Rental Assistance and Beyond

As we entered 2021, our new Executive Director made it a commitment to focus on NIFA’s mission, vision and core values. This renewed focus paved the way for NIFA to expand our footprint in all facets of housing. NIFA reached out to Nebraska's governor and State agencies to let them know that we wanted to help with Nebraska’s Balance of State Emergency Rental Assistance in the amount of \$158 million. Our offer to help was accepted and NIFA is now participating in the marketing, outreach and technical support of this funding. We have launched a full marketing campaign, hosted two ERA webinars and continue to present to our collaborative partners on a daily basis. We are now poised for further opportunities and expansive services as the American Rescue Plan unfolds.

As one of the smallest housing finance agencies in the country, we rely heavily on our partnerships and consider collaboration as one of NIFA’s core values. NIFA is considered a state housing expert and we are seen as a problem-solving and solution-focused agency. A part of being a housing expert means knowing who to call and when to call them. The relationships that we have built and constantly nurture has carried us through this very challenging past year, not only unscathed but revitalized.

DID YOU KNOW?

WEBINAR SERIES

WEBINAR SERIES

Due to COVID-19, NIFA cancelled our annual Housing Innovation Marketplace conference in 2020. In an effort to continue conversations and keep people connected, we created a new virtual meeting series with two themes: Conference Connections and Networking with NIFA.

Conference Connections

NIFA staff were able to transition 13 Housing Innovation Marketplace sessions to the webinar series to ensure current information was still distributed in a timely fashion.

Networking with NIFA

Staff adapted to the new normal and were able to create 17 new webinar topics relevant to the housing market during 2020. Five of those webinars were specifically geared to Property Managers.

FUN FACTS ABOUT THE 2020 WEBINAR SERIES

2,389 people participated in the 2020 webinar series. The 2019 conference and networking events had 1,598 attendees



Total number of webinars: 30
Average attendance per webinar: 80

NIFA investment: \$0

Software platform already established and all marketing was done digitally



Attendee statistics

Nebraska Counties:
45

Nebraska
Communities:
75

States:
19

2020 Webinar Topics

- Legal Aid of Nebraska - Housing
- Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development
- Housing First: Best Practices
- Credit Advisors
- Disaster Recovery Efforts
- Coordinated Entry
- Factory Built Homes
- Addressing Community Food Shortages
- How are National Housing Trust Funds being used in Nebraska
- Workforce Housing - Community Highlights
- HFA Advantage
- Tiny Homes Two Point OH
- Agricultural Resources in Nebraska
- Rental vs. Homeownership
- Overcoming Re-entry Complications
- NeighborWorks in Nebraska
- Nebraska Innovation Campus
- Eviction Prevention
- Profile of Nebraska
- Tenant Behavior
- Fair Housing
- Domestic Violence
- Local Food Promotion Program
- Human Trafficking
- Military Home Program
- Missing & Murdered Plenary
- Innovative Housing Ideas
- housing.ne.gov
- Burnout: Recognize & Recuperate
- Award winners celebration & farewell to Tim Kenny

Quotes from Attendees

"Congratulations! Leaders lead and NIFA is a leader. Thanks for all you do for Nebraska. Your programs have convinced me that economic development and adequate housing are the "chicken and egg" mystery that is key to Nebraska's future." B. Brogan

"Terrific panel! So many innovative and creative ideas. Thanks very much for providing this webinar." D. Wanek

"Thank you, thank you, thank you! Trainings like this one are very beneficial. I'm a Community Manager with Wilhoit Properties who has a strict criminal background policy, but I can see from this training that if that policy were relaxed for individuals who have successfully gone through the type of programs described today that we could be serving a whole new set of individuals that have the potential to be great residents." T. Harman

"Thank you for sharing this presentation on a topic I knew little about. I will be watching for further webinars in earnest." S. Brewster

"Even though you couldn't have your conference this year, which I understand was terribly disappointing, your webinars are reaching people all across the state that may not have been able to attend the conference! I have shared the series with several people here and I know they are gaining helpful information for their agencies. I heard someone say that because of this pandemic we will learn to do things differently, many of which we should continue even after we reach our new normal. Thank you for thinking outside of the box and continuing the positive outreach that NIFA is known for." J. Pederson

"I just wanted to send a quick note of thanks for the virtual professional development you've offered recently. The session on burn out and mental health was timely and worthwhile. I appreciate all you do!" A. Long

Outcomes

- Continued education and promotion of NIFA programs and resources
- Increased awareness of partnerships and NIFA's involvement in a variety of mission driven activities
- As a result of Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development's presentation several other communities were able to create and run socially distanced events for Food Drives, Housing and Employment opportunities in their communities as well
- Tiny Homes Two Point OH presentation has prompted discussions across the state about possible housing challenges that could be resolved with out of the box thinking like Tiny Homes and Co-op Housing
- Rental vs. Homeownership created a discussion about how to know when someone is ready for homeownership and how to increase homebuyer education
- Overcoming Re-entry Complications, Human Trafficking and the Missing and Murdered sessions highlighted barriers to those re-entering society and brought to light the very real dangers facing our most vulnerable populations.



2021 Webinar Wednesdays

Due to the success of the webinar series and the ongoing pandemic we have continued our informational webinars in 2021. We have combined the two series (Conference Connections and Networking with NIFA) into one program and renamed it Webinar Wednesdays. Our focus is to provide attendees with mission driven topics related to all NIFA departments and programs as well as highlighting community partners.

Webinar Wednesdays Registration & Schedule

You can view the NIFA Webinar Wednesday's schedule and register for upcoming events on our website: www.nifa.org

NIFA WEBINAR SERIES



A virtual series of selected topics from the 2020 conference session tracks. The series will focus on a range of topics relevant to homeownership, rental, supportive housing, technical topics and disaster recovery.



A virtual series for Nebraska communities, housing partners, non-profits, and all interested parties to participate in. This is a great opportunity to learn more about what is happening throughout the communities of Nebraska and resources that may be helpful to you and your community.



WEDNESDAY - OCTOBER 7 @ 10 AM

[REGISTER](#)

Fair Housing, Civil Rights

Speaker(s): Joe Garcia, Fair Housing Center of NE-IA – Abbi Swatsworth, OutNebraska – Margie Nichols, Lincoln Commission on Human Rights Senior Civil Rights – Vic Klaffer, Collective Impact Lincoln



WEDNESDAY - OCTOBER 14 @ 10 AM

[REGISTER](#)

Special Edition: Domestic Violence

Speaker(s): Lee Heflebower, Nebraska Coalition To End Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence – Hilary Wasserburger, DOVES Program – Linda Olson, Bright Horizons – Leah Droge, Friendship Home



WEDNESDAY - OCTOBER 21 @ 10 AM

[REGISTER](#)

Highlighting Locally Produced Food Resources

Speaker(s): Dudley Beyer, NIFA – Alex McKiernan, Robinette Farms – Justin Jones, Lone Tree Foods – Amy Tabor, Open Harvest



WEDNESDAY - OCTOBER 28 @ 10 AM

[REGISTER](#)

Special Edition: Human Trafficking

Speaker(s): Christie Weston, NIFA – Kathy Kemler, No Trafficking – FBI Supervisory Special Agent, John Hallock – Julie Shrader, Rejuvenating Women

Special Edition: a special topic series designed to expand your knowledge of available resources for renters. Learn how to access those resources and discover how they can help tenants be more successful renters. This series will provide a better understanding of Nebraska's behavioral health system, community resources and the challenges tenants may face when making decisions. Property managers will find this series especially helpful as they balance staying connected to their tenants while keeping their units rented and limiting their loss of revenue.

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WEDNESDAY - SEPTEMBER 2 @ 10 AM

[REGISTER](#)

Nebraska Innovation Campus

Speaker(s): Brooke Goedert - Administrative Coordinator @ Nebraska Innovation Campus



WEDNESDAY - SEPTEMBER 16 @ 10 AM

[REGISTER](#)

Special Edition: Eviction Prevention

Speaker(s): Denise Packard, UNL Center on Children Families and the Law - Ryan Bailey, Blue Valley Community Action - Ashley Larson, Southeast Nebraska Development District (SEND D)



WEDNESDAY - SEPTEMBER 23 @ 10 AM

[REGISTER](#)

Profile of Nebraska: How to Use It

Speaker(s): Tim Gottgetreu, Western Economic Services



WEDNESDAY - SEPTEMBER 30 @ 10 AM

[REGISTER](#)

Special Edition: Tenant Behavior

Speaker(s): Kristin Nelson, Region V Systems - Arnold Remington, Targeted Adult Service Coordination (TASC) - Officer Melissa Ripley, Lincoln Police Department

Special Edition: a special topic series designed to expand your knowledge of available resources for renters. Learn how to access those resources and discover how they can help tenants be more successful renters. This series will provide a better understanding of Nebraska's behavioral health system, community resources and the challenges tenants may face when making decisions. Property managers will find this series especially helpful as they balance staying connected to their tenants while keeping their units rented and limiting their loss of revenue.

SOCIAL POSTS

NIFAHousing
November 24, 2020 · 🌐

Another CARES Act Convo has been released! Thank you to Tera Kucera from [Care Corps, Inc.](#) for all of the helpful information.
<https://youtu.be/dqDC1YDN79c>



YOUTUBE.COM
CARES Convo with LifeHouse
CARES Act Conversation with Tera Kucera from Care Corps LifeHou...

👍 You and 1 other 2 Shares

NIFAHousing
November 17, 2020 · 🌐

CARES Act Convos with [Women's Center for Advancement](#)
<https://youtu.be/fQITVBRSC8E>

Thanks to Brittany Parker for discussing CARES funds and resources that are available at the Women's Center for Advancement.... See More



YOUTUBE.COM
CARES Convo with Women's Center for Advancement
ARES Act Conversation with Brittany Parker to discuss Women's C...

NIFAHousing
October 27, 2020 · 🌐

CARES Act Convos with [Hope Harbor, Inc.](#)
<https://youtu.be/Hyp7C3iSMSY>



YOUTUBE.COM
CARES Convo with Hope Harbor
CARES Act Conversation with Liz Mayfield to discuss Hope Harbor ...

👍 You, Robin Ambroz-Hollman and Pamela Ann Otto

NIFAHousing
November 3, 2020 · 🌐

CARES Act Convos with [United Way of the Midlands](#)
<https://youtu.be/-Qo587h7D7w>


CARES Act Conversation with Tiffany Cook and Heather Tomczak to discuss United Way of the Midlands.... See More



YOUTUBE.COM
CARES Convo with United Way of the Midlands
CARES Act Conversation with Tiffany Cook and Heather Tomczak to...

NIFAHousing
December 23, 2020 · 🌐

Push play on this CARES Act Convo with Susanne Blue to discuss [Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach!](#) Thank you for the helpful information.
Additional COVID-19 & CARES Resources:
<https://www.nifa.org/emergency-response-info>
https://youtu.be/Q_4MrzGN2bY



YOUTUBE.COM
CARES Convo with Matt Talbot Kitchen and Outreach
CARES Act Conversation with Susanne Blue to discuss Matt Talbot ...

NIFAHousing
October 21, 2020 · 🌐

CARES Act Convos with Tina Murray, Director of Crisis Engagement at [Together](#)

This video series will provide information and highlight CARES Act resources that are available throughout the State of Nebraska.
Subscribe to our YouTube Channel:... See More



YOUTUBE.COM
CARES Convo with Omaha Street Outreach
CARES Act Conversation with Tina Murray to discuss Omaha Street ...



YOU'RE INVITED!

Networking with
NIFA
Special Edition: Property Managers

Learn More

**To see full COVID-19 Impact on
Nebraska Rental Market**
[Click HERE>>>](#)

NIFAHousing
January 29 · 🌐

Each year, NIFA engages Western Economic Services (WES) to compile and assemble the data for the creation of NIFA's Profile of Nebraska and Nebraska Dashboard. As part of this effort, WES does an annual survey of property managers throughout Nebraska.

To measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nebraska's Rental Housing Market, the 2020 Survey of Rental Properties asked property managers to report on how the pandemic has affected their properties and tenants.

<http://ow.ly/fm7t50Dm54t>

**COVID-19 Impact on the
Nebraska Rental Market**

👍 1

From: [Amanda M. Wusk](#) on behalf of [NIFA](#)
Subject: Eviction in Nebraska: Data & News
Date: Thursday, January 28, 2021 2:47:53 PM
Attachments:

COVID-19 Impact on the Nebraska Rental Market



NIFA Partners,
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Approximately, 20 percent of the landlords that were surveyed noted that they have tenants that are either having a hard time paying the full amount or not paying any rent.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE REPORT >>](#)

EVICITION CONVO with Legal Aid of Nebraska

A conversation on eviction in Nebraska with Scott Mertz and Erin Olsen of Legal Aid of Nebraska



[PLAY>>](#)

***If you know of someone who is at risk of eviction for nonpayment of rent please contact:**

- [Legal Aid of Nebraska](#)
- [211 Helpline](#)
- [Lincoln Prevention Assistance Fund](#)