

# A Mighty Task- Repurposing Technology

**Nebraska Investment Finance Authority**

Management Innovation: Technology

**HFA Staff Contact**

Robin Ambroz

[robin.ambroz@nifa.org](mailto:robin.ambroz@nifa.org)

### **Introduction: A Mighty Task**

For Nebraska, the COVID-19 pandemic came on the heels of one of the state's most devastating natural disasters. The historic flooding of 2019 had already left many homes destroyed, families displaced, livestock perished and fields with crops underwater. The Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) has played a vital role in disaster recovery as one of two agencies appointed to The Governor's Task Force on Housing.

The state and many of its residents were struggling to recover from the flooding when we found ourselves facing the onset of another crisis. As of June 1, 2020 the number of novel coronavirus infections were continuing to rise across the state of Nebraska. Particularly hard hit are the Nebraska counties with meat packing plants as a major employer.

NIFA needed a way to continue to support our housing and community development partners and distribute information to meet the needs of Nebraskans across the state. NIFA's small team of 28 staff members mobilized quickly to provide these services while following social distancing guidelines and transitioning to a work from home model to ensure employee safety. While continuing to serve as a lead agency in flood recovery, NIFA is providing community wide information and timely educational webinars to accomplish this goal.

### **Innovative and Replicable: Repurposing an Existing Technology**

While many agencies, including NIFA have used web based meeting platforms, we have not used it on the scale we have adopted during the pandemic. Previous to the social distancing and in person meeting limits, we had only used the GoToMeeting platform on a limited basis and, for the most part, only when absolutely necessary.

GoToMeeting and GoToWebinar, and similar platforms, are readily available to all consumers. The manner in which NIFA utilized these tools is easily replicable. Picking a platform that meets your needs and then spending some time and effort in the planning the process can help you succeed in a time of crisis. In fact, the benefits of these platforms far exceed the minimal cost.

### **Responding to a Management Challenge or Opportunity: Changing Directions**

NIFA's annual affordable housing conference and trainings, the Housing Innovation Marketplace was scheduled to occur on March 16, 2020 with a record registration of 810 attendees. On that same day, the governor of Nebraska instituted a 10 person limit on all gatherings throughout the state. The conference was first postponed until June and finally, cancelled in mid-May when the capacity limits for gatherings had not been lifted.

The pandemic also affected NIFA's monthly meetings, Omaha a.m. and Capital City Breakfast Club. These meetings are held in Omaha and Lincoln to highlight projects, programs and developments occurring in our metro areas and across the state.

How could NIFA continue to provide technical assistance related to our agency's mission? Equally daunting, how could we continue to effectively operate with so many people working from home across the state? How could we continue to hold Board of Director meetings to keep our agency operational? In response to the limitations caused by the pandemic, NIFA quickly adapted to a webinar series for our annual conference, trainings and monthly meetings. We used the same platform for weekly staff meetings, individual department meetings and our Board of Director meetings.

Conference ConNEctions and Networking with NIFA, our new webinar series, have taken the place of our in-person meetings. Conference ConNEctions has become the place to present some of the sessions

originally planned for our annual event. The Networking with NIFA webinar series highlights community organizations providing programs and services to Nebraskans including emergency services.

**Achieve Strategic Objectives: Technical Assistance**

In 2019 prior to the pandemic, NIFA hosted a number of in-person trainings including our annual affordable housing conference, LIHTC Compliance Training, Lender Training and monthly community events in Omaha and Lincoln. The costs and attendance for these events were:

Housing Conference: 450 attendees LIHTC Compliance Training: 196 attendees Net Cost: \$16,634.86 <b>Number of People Trained: 646</b>
Omaha and Lincoln community meetings: 337 attendees Net Cost: \$4,504.46 <b>Number of People Trained: 337</b>
Lender Training: 255 attendees Net Cost: \$17,669.00 <b>Number of People Trained: 255</b>
<b>Total Number of People Trained: 1238</b> <b>Total Net Cost to NIFA: \$38,808.32</b>

NIFA was committed to providing technical assistance to our partners in housing and community development despite our new challenges. Unsure of what the results would be, NIFA began using our existing GoToMeeting platform to host webinars. While this met our need internally for agency wide and individual department meetings, it did not have the capacity to accommodate what would soon become larger community meetings.

As a result, we expanded the use of our existing GoToMeeting technology to include an upgrade webinar feature: GoToWebinar. The number of people seeking to participate on our informational webinars required us to add an additional license. The cost was minimal as we were able to use GoToWebinar’s emergency licensing at no cost as we were beginning to host webinars. At the time the emergency licensing expired, the cost of the upgrade and the addition of a second license represented a change from \$950 per year for one license to \$2136 per year for two licenses with the upgrade feature (an additional \$1,186).

**Measurable Improvements to Agency Operations During A Crisis**

By utilizing the GoToWebinar platform, NIFA was able to provide training that was originally scheduled in our traditional, in-person format at no cost to participants. In fact, the new webinar format has expanded our reach. Those that might not have been able to travel to Lincoln or Omaha for the in-person events can now participate in our once a week trainings. To date we have provided training on a wide variety of topics, including those directly related to COVID-19 challenges and resources.

Additionally, we provided the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Compliance Training in its entirety using the webinar format. Attendees of the LIHTC Compliance Training pay a registration fee and are awarded a certificate for their attendance. The certificate can be used to receive points on future LIHTC

Applications. However, we were able to charge a reduced fee of only \$50, much less than what they typically pay for the in-person training.

The upgrade to our existing technology has improved NIFA's agency wide operations. The cost and attendance for NIFA to transition our traditional in-person meetings to webinars has been:

Conference ConNEctions : 322 attendees
Networking with NIFA: 383 attendees
Viewing of Recorded Webinars: 99 unique sessions
LIHTC Compliance Training: 232 attendees
<b>Total Number of People Trained: 1036</b>
<b>Revenue from LIHTC Compliance Training: \$12,040</b>
<b>Total Expenses for GoToWebinar, Trainer, and Materials: \$8,687.27</b>
<b>Total Net Cost to NIFA: \$0 with \$3,352.73 in revenue</b>

### **Providing Benefits that Outweigh the Cost**

When the decision was made to cancel our annual affordable housing event and the Governor of Nebraska announced social distancing requirements and meeting attendance limits, NIFA had to determine the direction we would take to support our residents and partners in the face of a nationwide pandemic. Still struggling to recover from historic flooding in 2019, our communities and residents were faced with many trials affecting not only their housing needs but also basic human essentials.

A strategic goal of providing technical assistance to our partners and residents became an effort to provide Nebraskans with emergency resource information. Our existing Disaster Resource Page transitioned to an Emergency Response page, including COVID-19 resources. Once that was accomplished, we turned our attention to staying connected to the community and providing educational information.

Our new use of our existing technology allowed us to not only provide technical assistance but gave us a tool in which to stay connected to our communities and assess changing and often growing needs. NIFA was able to quickly provide our network of community partners and individual residents of Nebraska with information on crucial resources available to them.

The total cost for the in-person 2019 Housing Innovation Marketplace, LIHTC Compliance Training, Lender Training and community meetings was \$38,808.32. With the repurposing use of our existing GoToMeeting technology, we have experienced a revenue of \$3,352.73 making our efforts a benefit that far outweighs the cost.

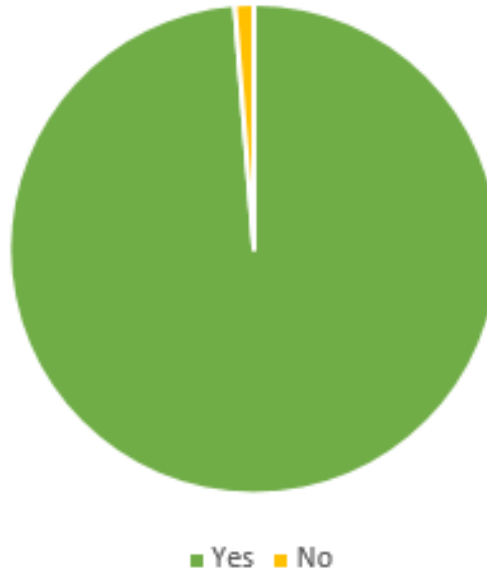
### **Conclusion: Effective use of Resources**

NIFA was able to train almost as many people in a 3-month period as we did in the prior year using technology to reach across our state, while saving our agency money at the same time. Our in-person events have always offered our attendees with not just training and education but a means to network with others in the housing world. The networking, exposure to products from our exhibitors, access to NIFA staff and excellent speakers is invaluable. However, we have used the technology resources at our disposal in the most effective way possible. We have managed to keep the organizations that provide the most necessary needs to their community members as informed as possible by using technology. In many instances, attendees have made connections through the online format with our presenters that better allow them to serve the residents of their communities. This use of technology has been crucial to NIFA's ability to stay connected to our partners during this difficult time.

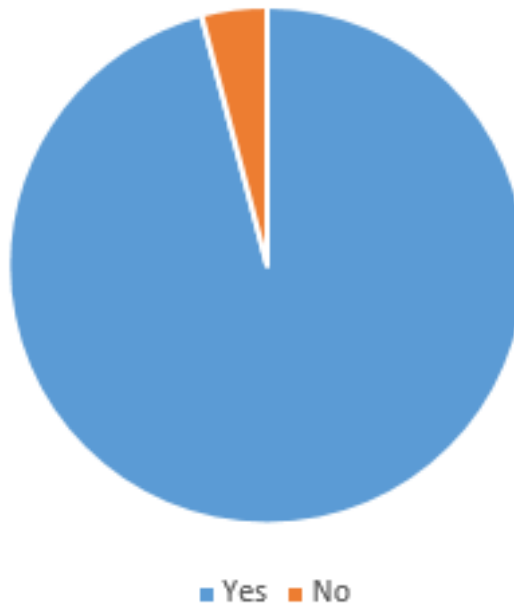
## SURVEY Results

(318 Surveys received)

Would you recommend NIFA webinars to others?



Was this topic useful



## NEWS

Governor lowers public event limit to 10 people in Nebraska

[https://journalstar.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/governor-lowers-public-event-limit-to-10-people-in-nebraska/article\\_b026cf5f-1f12-5ac7-8d64-07181da9aded.html](https://journalstar.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/governor-lowers-public-event-limit-to-10-people-in-nebraska/article_b026cf5f-1f12-5ac7-8d64-07181da9aded.html)

Ricketts: More than 1,000 Covid-19 cases amount Nebraska food processing workers

<http://netnebraska.org/article/news/1218033/ricketts-more-1000-covid-19-cases-among-nebraska-food-processing-workers>

Ricketts: Nearly 1 in 6 Nebraska cases linked to meat plants

<https://www.1011now.com/content/news/Ricketts-Nearly-1-in-6-Nebraska-cases-linked-to-meat-plants-570295301.html>

When Covid-19 hits a rural meatpacking plant, county infection rates soar to five times the average

<https://thefern.org/2020/05/when-covid-19-hits-a-rural-meatpacking-plant-county-infection-rates-soar-to-five-times-the-average/>

Gov. Ricketts urges Nebraskans in Covid-19 hot spots to stay put

<https://nebraska.tv/news/local/gov-ricketts-urges-nebraskans-in-covid-19-hot-spots-to-stay-put>





## ENCOURAGING CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Looking for a job? This drive-thru career fair might be for you

[https://journalstar.com/business/local/looking-for-a-job-this-drive-thru-career-fair-might-be-for-you/article\\_c39bd57e-e648-57cd-8225-7743abe5ad47.html](https://journalstar.com/business/local/looking-for-a-job-this-drive-thru-career-fair-might-be-for-you/article_c39bd57e-e648-57cd-8225-7743abe5ad47.html)

1,000 cars line up for drive-thru food bank in Grand Island

[https://journalstar.com/news/state-and-regional/nebraska/1-000-cars-line-up-for-drive-thru-food-bank-in-grand-island/article\\_510bf80b-d8df-52fd-b65b-51c1a9168010.html](https://journalstar.com/news/state-and-regional/nebraska/1-000-cars-line-up-for-drive-thru-food-bank-in-grand-island/article_510bf80b-d8df-52fd-b65b-51c1a9168010.html)



HFA: Nebraska Investment Finance Authority  
Entry Name: A Mighty Task - Repurposing Technology  
Category\Subcategory: Management Innovation\Technology

## WEBINARS AVAILABLE ONLINE

See a list of upcoming webinars and register online:

[https://www-nifa-org-files.s3.amazonaws.com/148a-25811767-Webinars%207.2020%20schedule.pdf?versionId=f5qNmgEjBBuDNsaBuUzSbZRmhc\\_KA8wg](https://www-nifa-org-files.s3.amazonaws.com/148a-25811767-Webinars%207.2020%20schedule.pdf?versionId=f5qNmgEjBBuDNsaBuUzSbZRmhc_KA8wg)

View past webinars online :

<https://www.nifa.org/com-dev>





# 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 - MAY 27 @ 10 AM**

## **Housing First: Best Practices**

Speaker(s): Jeff Yarbrough, Vanessa Crossgrove Fry, Crissy Canganelli

[REGISTER](#)



**THURSDAY - MAY 28 @ 10 AM**

## **Credit Advisors Foundation**

Speaker(s): Jon Firmature, Lisa Cameron

[REGISTER](#)



**WEDNESDAY - JUNE 3 @ 10 AM**

## **Disaster Recovery Status Update**

Speaker(s): Hagerty Consulting & NEMA

[REGISTER](#)



**WEDNESDAY - JUNE 10 @ 10 AM**

## **Coordinated Entry System**

Speaker(s): Jeff Chambers - UNL Center on Children, Families and the Law & Randy McCoy - Metro Area Continuum of Care for the Homeless (MACCH)

[REGISTER](#)



**WEDNESDAY - JUNE 17 @ 10 AM**

## **Factory Built Homes**

Speaker(s): John Wright - Fannie Mae, Dave Busche - Skyline Champion Homes

[REGISTER](#)



**WEDNESDAY - JUNE 24 @ 10 AM**

## **Addressing Community Food Shortages**

Speaker(s): Brian Barks - Food Bank for the Heartland  
Scott Young - Food Bank of Lincoln

[REGISTER](#)

# 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.



Networking with  
**NIFA**

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 - JULY 1 @ 10 AM**

[REGISTER](#) ▶



## **How are National Housing Trust Funds Being Used in Nebraska?**

*Speaker(s): Mechele Grimes - DED, Tera Kucera - Lifehouse, Tyson O'Connell - Wishcamper Partners & Kathy Mesner - Mesner Development Co.*



Networking with  
**NIFA**

**THURSDAY - JULY 16 @ 10 AM**

[REGISTER](#) ▶

## **Workforce Housing - Community Highlights**

*Speaker(s): Cliff Mesner - Mesner Development Co., Lisa Hurley - York, Brian Bywater - Schuyler & TBA - Hastings*



**WEDNESDAY - JULY 22 @ 10 AM**

[REGISTER](#) ▶

## **Freddie Mac's HFA Advantage Product**

*Speaker(s): Erik Nore & David Mendez - Freddie Mac*



**WEDNESDAY - JULY 29 @ 10 AM**

[REGISTER](#) ▶

## **Tiny Homes Two Point OH**

*Speaker(s): Rhonda Mattingly - Bridges to Hope, Dan Bryant - Square One Villages, Darin Smith and Mindy Crook - Arch Icon Development & Linda Twomey, Siena Francis House*

## QUOTES

I want to thank everyone at NIFA for offering the no cost webinars. I attended the 5/27 and 5/28 webinars, and am already registered for the four June webinars that I am looking forward to attending. Again, thank you for all that you do.

Thank You,

Theresa Harman | Community Manager  
Village at Papillion | Wilhoit Properties, Inc.

I just wanted to thank you and the presenters for the webinar update this morning.

It was very informative. We are still working to close out our claim with FEMA. It is good to know there are folks still on the ground and behind the scenes working for those that were not as fortunate as us and are still struggling to get their lives back on track.

Shellie Vandeman HCCP, C11P, SCS  
Compliance Specialist | MHEG | [www.mheginco.com](http://www.mheginco.com)

I just wanted to let you know that our packets are ready for our mobile food pantry today. The DOL provided information as well as our local United Way, Rape and Domestic Abuse, Pawsitive Partners Humane Society, and the North Platte Public Schools. 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.

Have a great week!!

Judy Pederson, Owner





## QUOTES

Thank you! I really enjoyed the Housing First webinar. It was helpful to hear about techniques that have been successful for other sites and organization in our homeless continuums. I appreciated the reports with positive outcome data as it helps solidify that housing first principles work. This type of information helps others feel confidence with talking points about how permanent supportive housing with housing first, recovery, and harm reduction principles really make a difference.

Thank you for organizing this during a unique time!

**Tracy Hortman, LCSW, ACM-SW**  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

I want to commend you for the webinar content for the Housing First Model. I was very impressed with all the programs.

Was great to hear how other states and programs implement programming for this type of housing.

**Kendra Dean**  
**Cirrus House**

Fantastic session - thank you!

Gary Hill  
CEGA Services/Contact Center

Amanda, thank you for providing the opportunity and platform for Scott and me to talk about COVID-19's impact on our food banks and the people we serve. I loved the fact so many questions were asked. Is there a possibility of getting a roster of people who attended? If not, that's OK. Just interested to see who was participating.

Thanks again! It was fun!

Brian Barks  
President & CEO  
Food Bank for the Heartland



## QUOTES

I found the meeting (Addressing Community Food Shortages) very informative and know this knowledge will be put to good use!

Sue Manning  
Disaster Outreach Worker  
Nebraska Strong Recovery Project





HFA: Nebraska Investment Finance Authority  
Entry Name: A Mighty Task - Repurposing Technology  
Category/Subcategory: Management Innovation/Technology

## Webinar Invitations

To continue conversations and keep people connected, NIFA is hosting a new virtual meeting series:



Join us May 20, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.  
for a presentation by **Lincoln Partnership for Economic Development**

**Bryan Seck, Director of Workforce Development**



Register online: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3662028336642499852>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Questions and comments can be emailed to [nifa@nifa.org](mailto:nifa@nifa.org)



## Webinar Invitations

**Disaster Recovery:  
Status Update**  
**June 3, 2020 at  
10:00 a.m.**



Since we won't be gathering at the Housing Innovation Marketplace this year, NIFA is offering a series of webinars that will bring some of the conference sessions to you via your computer at no cost!

**REGISTER**

View full webinar schedule [HERE!](#)

2020 Housing Innovation Marketplace Conference Sponsors and Exhibitors include:





HFA: Nebraska Investment Finance Authority  
Entry Name: A Mighty Task - Repurposing Technology  
Category/Subcategory: Management Innovation/Technology

## Annual LIHTC Compliance Training Digital Invitation

Annual LIHTC Compliance Training  
Online Webinar

June 23-25, 2020  
9 AM - 1 PM daily



Join us and gain an understanding of how to maintain project compliance and the importance of doing so

Trainer: Gary Kirkman, E&A Team

The course highlights Nebraska state specific policies & procedures in addition to federal requirements

During this training participants use:

- Case studies
- Verification examples
- Knowledge check exercises

Register and become skilled in project compliance!

NOTE: The attendee must attend the entire conference to receive a certificate of attendance. To receive points in future LIHTC Applications, you must receive a certificate of attendance.

**REGISTER  
TODAY**





*Working apart but still working together for Nebraska*