



## **Annual Report**

**Covering the period -  
January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005**

Respectfully submitted by  
Linda Fettig  
Executive Director  
Rural Development Commission

## **HISTORY:**

The Nebraska Legislature created the current Rural Development Commission (RDC) in 2003. The commissioners were appointed in the summer of 2003, and Lisa Dominisse was appointed as the director in October of that year. The RDC opened its office in North Platte in 2004 and held five commission meetings that year completing a strategic planning process and adopting the following mission statement:

The Nebraska Rural Development Commission is a voice for rural Nebraska communities in the creation of laws, policies, and other initiatives that affect economic, civic, and social conditions, and foster cooperation and understanding among all agencies and organizations, public and private.

During 2005, the Commission met regularly proceeding with the activities and projects pertinent to its mission.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN AND WORK PLAN:**

The attached special edition of *The Connection* details the strategic plan and outlines the current workplan. This newsletter has been provided to all the Senators as a program update.

### **Program Achievements:**

The Commission was actively involved in the request to the Unicameral for funding for rural programs. Since passage of the **Building Entrepreneurial Communities and Agricultural Innovation and Value-Added Grant** programs by the Unicameral, the Commission has assisted with guidelines, application design and informational meetings. The Commission will be assisting with the evaluation and monitoring of the grants. Grant deadlines are January 27, 2006, with a second round of funding anticipated in early fall of 2006.

The Commission partnered with the University of Nebraska - Rural Initiative to bring information to Nebraska about a community assessment model that may assist some communities with planning for their futures.

As a response to the need to encourage entrepreneurship, the Commission helped sponsor the first Nebraska Entrepreneur Business Plan Competition that will result in the winner receiving cash and technical assistance to aid the growth of their business.

Nebraska RDC continues to be involved with the National Rural Development Partnership and received a small grant to participate in the resident recruitment program sponsored by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and to assist with expenses for staff and commissioners to attend a national conference in 2006.

### **Collaborative Achievements:**

To maximize the Commission's resources and to avoid any duplication of efforts, the Commission partners whenever possible with other rural resource providers. The Commission is actively represented on several committees, boards, and councils within the state including the Partnership for Rural Nebraska, the Nebraska Information Technology Committee community council, the Nebraska Development Network, Hometown Competitiveness program advisory council, the Nebraska Economic Development Association education committee, and the GROW Nebraska advisory committee. It also is part of the National Rural Development Partnership, an executive board member of the Partnership for Rural America and a member of the American Enterprise Organization.

Additionally, it partners with other state agencies and entities such as the Resource Conservation and Development staff, Nebraska Business Development Centers, community college staff, development utility partners, University of Nebraska extension educators, University of Nebraska - Rural Initiative, and federal entities including the staff of EDA development districts, and the USDA- Rural Development.

### **Future Plans:**

Meeting regularly, the Commission will be updating its strategic plan in the spring. Committee structure has been formed and will be active in both the design and implementation of future Commission work. Participation in the marketing, informational meetings, and monitoring of the Building Entrepreneurial Communities and Agricultural Innovation and Value-Added Agricultural grant programs will continue through 2006. The Commission will continue to partner with rural commissions and councils in other states to foster opportunities to improve rural options.

To better assist with information about the Commission, an updated website will be launched in late January, 2006. The Commissioners receive a monthly newsletter on Commission activities and those also will be available on the website.

**Staffing:**

Lisa Dominisse resigned from her appointment in May - 2005. Linda Fettig was named Acting Director from May until August - 2005, when she was hired as Executive Director. The Commission has a staff of 1.5 with the addition of part-time administrative staff in December - 2005.

Attachment: The Connection  
Special Edition  
January 2006