

# BACK TO BUSINESS 2021-2022

## Moments that Matter

How we respond in adversity determines our resilience. We must make bold public policy decisions during the remainder of the pandemic and immediately thereafter to emerge with the type of necessary growth agenda to fuel our economic recovery and ensure the well-being of all Nebraskans.

Going into the pandemic, the state faced critical workforce and technology-enabled job creation challenges. There was an urgent need for new approaches to keep top talent, foster more in-state business expansion, and attract more growth companies. There was a growing need to modernize state and local government and our state tax code to both address excessive tax burdens and sustain the state revenues necessary to meet commitments to public services and education. Finally, there was a need to enhance the innovation and technology infrastructure of the state to remain competitive with peer state, many of whom were making larger investments in their economic vitality.

The global pandemic has changed none of these dynamics. If anything, it has simply made our work ever more urgent and the case for a comprehensive economic strategy like the Blueprint Nebraska plan even more compelling. But it has also opened new doors for Nebraska to leverage its quality of life, geographic, and natural resource advantages in the post-pandemic climate. We must courageously push through these challenges and opportunities.



### NE CHAMBER RECOVERY PRIORITIES 2021 – 2022

1. Address the immediate needs of families, workers, businesses, and communities in crisis to preserve Nebraska's rich quality of life and economic advantages
2. Leverage Nebraska's strengths to attract new residents and grow our economy post-pandemic

## NE Chamber Commitment

*NE Chamber members are committed to building public, private and nonprofit partnerships in pursuit of bold initiatives that increase opportunity for all Nebraskans and move the state forward economically.*

*We recognize our work must transcend politics, geography, and the inertia of the status quo. We also realize game-changing progress is not possible without the*

*tough work of building consensus. Such work requires mutual respect and a genuine search for common ground.*

*We acknowledge this discussion and process is necessary for swift action that sustains and expands Nebraska's economic opportunities and competitiveness across the U.S. and internationally.*

# COVID-19: The Disruptor

For businesses in the pandemic, worries about filling open positions transformed overnight into fears of disappearing customers or jobs. Hospitality, travel and entertainment were particularly hard-hit. Survival plans quickly replaced economic development plans in many instances. Once-abundant supplies and goods for manufacturing were harder to come by as supply chains were disrupted.

Quick, decisive action by local, state, and U.S. leaders, in addition to business innovation, have gone a long way in stabilizing the economy and starting us down the road to economic recovery. Vaccines are on the way. Yet, some businesses have not reopened. Communities and families continue to struggle. As much as possible, we must continue to respond to their calls for help.



## COVID-19 Recovery - Immediate Recovery Priorities

1. Move out-of-work Nebraskans back into jobs
2. Support work reentry with quality childcare, training, broadband and flexible work options
3. Rebuild hard-hit sectors critical to community vitality and growth
4. Protect businesses and institutions against unfair COVID-19 lawsuits
5. Fuel innovation growth by encouraging research, development, and entrepreneurship

## Focusing Forward

As painful as it is, COVID-19 is serving as an economic “reset button” for business owners, as well as community and state leaders. As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, several report value in reinvigorating their approach, finding efficiencies, and offering new, innovative solutions.

*“[The pandemic has] given me a chance to step away from the counter, really look at a different picture at what we do and how we execute it even better.”*

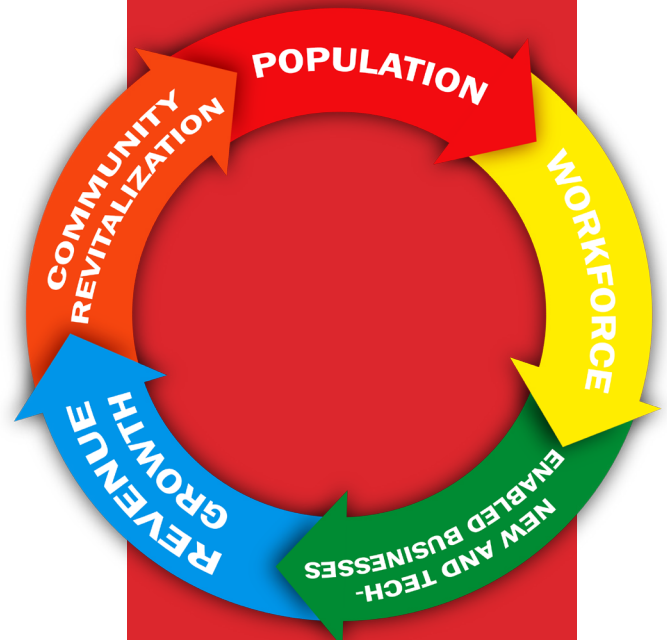
- Jen Thoreson, JD's Coffee Shop, Seward

At the state level, the race to recovery has begun. The prize is a radical boost in talent attraction. Population and workforce growth are essential to state and community growth over the next decade. Several regions are already launching bold initiatives to attract young workers and families.

Both going into and coming out of the pandemic, the NE Chamber fully embraced Blueprint Nebraska's 15 priority initiatives for economic development with immediate interest in:

- ✓ Modernizing our tax system
- ✓ Attracting and retaining young people and families
- ✓ Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship

We are anxious to make progress on these priorities, particularly because they enhance our ability to compete for workforce and attract investment in quick-growing, tech-enabled sectors.



# Nebraska's Post-Pandemic Edge

Nebraska has a head start in the race to recovery. A historical commitment to fiscal responsibility and a healthy rainy-day fund, combined with a targeted pandemic response that minimized business interruption when possible, delivered economic resilience in the crisis.

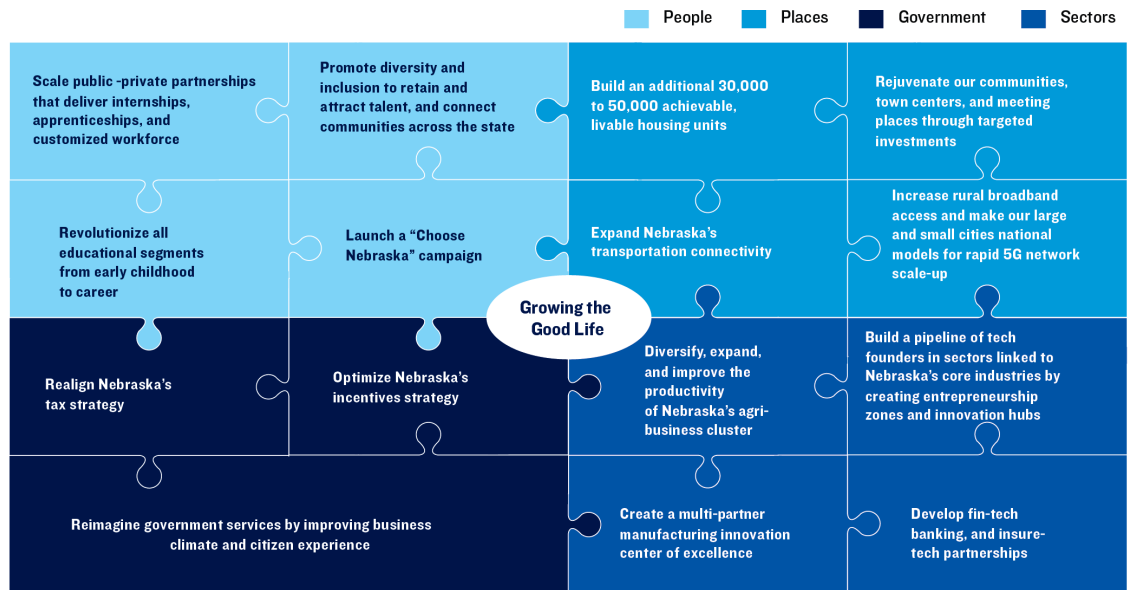
In addition, Nebraska already has a strategic economic development plan in Blueprint Nebraska that was developed with the input of literally thousands of Nebraskans throughout the state. This plan capitalizes on Nebraska's quality-of-life and economic advantages to build a more prosperous future for all Nebraskans.

According to Blueprint Nebraska, the state has natural competitive advantages including strong, resilient agricultural, manufacturing, transportation and financial technical sectors; coveted quality of life; vibrant communities, with natural resources and quality education; and a commitment to efficient use of government resources.

To grow Nebraska's post-pandemic lead and win the nationwide race for new residents, the state can excel in additional opportunities that:

- 1) Develop workforce
- 2) Enhance communities
- 3) Modernize government
- 4) Grow the economy

Refer to the NE Chamber and Nebraska Blueprint Economic Recovery and Growth Priorities (MATRIX Handout) for more information.



## About Blueprint Nebraska

An initiative prompted by Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts and then University of Nebraska President Hank Bounds, Blueprint Nebraska brought the combined expertise and input of 320 state, private sector, agricultural, educational and civic leaders from across the state to develop 15 initiatives that significantly stimulate economic growth by 2030. The process drew unprecedented public engagement, with more than 7,000 Nebraskans providing insights through 60 public meetings and a statewide survey.

The plan will be measured against a series of economic indicators and rankings to ensure success by 2030, including:

- ✓ Make Nebraska a top-three state to live in, according to various national rankings;
- ✓ Create 25,000 jobs;
- ✓ Grow annual income of each Nebraskan by \$15,000;
- ✓ Attract 43,000 18- to 34-year-old residents to Nebraska; and
- ✓ Boost research and development investment by \$200 million annually.

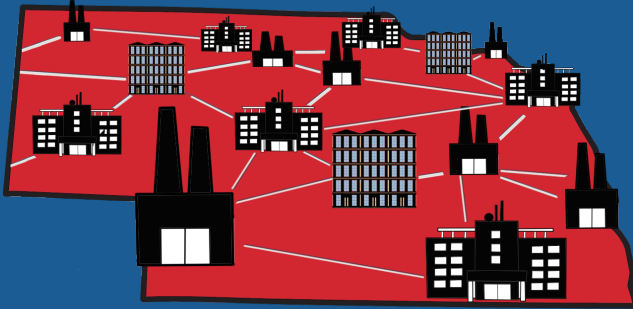
As the only statewide, broad-based business and industry association, the NE Chamber is proud to be a private sector partner in Blueprint Nebraska. Learn more at [blueprint-nebraska.org](http://blueprint-nebraska.org).

## Who We Are:

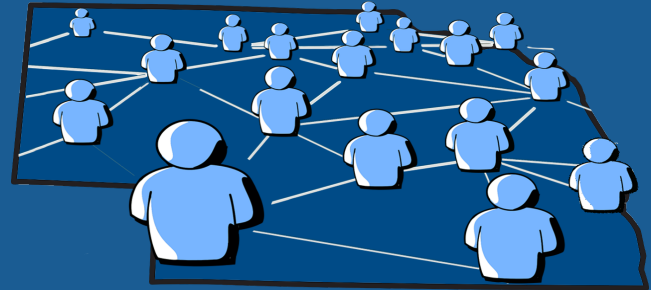
Our members are current and future corporate citizens and mainstreet businesses. They hire local people, invest, buy goods and services, pay taxes that support local schools and government, donate to charity and encourage volunteerism. They operate here because Nebraska offers a good quality of life, access to national transportation networks, a growth-oriented business climate, a skilled and

hardworking workforce, a low cost of living, great schools, and more.

At the NE Chamber, we pride ourselves on advocating to sustain and enhance that environment. We are the largest, broad-based business association in Nebraska.



Our members represent more than 400 different types of businesses in more than 150 communities across the state.



Over 60 local chambers of commerce and dozens of state trade and professional associations have joined our work to keep businesses successful and our communities growing.

## What We Do:

The NE Chamber is a steadfast advocate for free enterprise, a competitive business climate and economic growth. We take that responsibility seriously.

Our members join for a variety of reasons:

- ✓ Results-driven advocacy at the Nebraska State Capitol and state agencies
- ✓ Involvement in statewide tax, economic, labor and regulatory policy direction

- ✓ A professional peer network with which to collaborate, share ideas and build clientele
- ✓ Coordinated initiatives within sectors
- ✓ Workforce and economic development partnerships through Blueprint Nebraska
- ✓ Leadership development
- ✓ Sponsorship, promotion and other reputational benefits

## How We Succeed:

The shared vision of NE Chamber members invigorates our work and resolve. Together, we are vigilant and engaged in public policy. Through grassroots, government involvement, education, and strong statewide partnerships, we build actionable strategies to keep Nebraska's business climate competitive and its economy growing. We deliver measurable results.

Our diverse network of professionals is unequalled by any other statewide organization. Sharing best practices and finding new clients and suppliers is easy within the vast NE Chamber membership, which keeps our organization growing.

We leverage our affiliations with the U.S. Chamber and the National Association of Manufacturers to advocate on behalf of members in Congress and share national expertise.



100 Years Standing Up for American Enterprise  
**U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**



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