

RURAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

- Administration: These statutes assign certain responsibilities to the Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, State Office Building, 301 Centennial Mall South, Lincoln, Nebraska 68509, telephone: (402) 471-2341.
- Revision: These statutes were revised during the 2011 session of the Nebraska Legislature.
- Rules: This Department has no authority to promulgate regulations under this Act.

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81-3601. Rural Development Commission; created. There is hereby created the Rural Development Commission. The commission shall advocate and recommend programs that encourage regional cooperation and foster community sustainability and economic development initiatives in rural areas of Nebraska. The chairperson and vice-chairperson of the commission shall supervise the hiring of the executive director using the state personnel hiring process and may employ personnel necessary to carry out the powers and duties of the commission. The Lieutenant Governor, the Governor's Policy Research Office, the Department of Economic Development, the Department of Agriculture, and other state agencies may provide administrative and technical support under the direct supervision of the Governor. The commission may secure cooperation and assistance of other appropriate government and private-sector entities specifically for rural programs.

81-3602. Rural Development Commission; members; terms; meetings; expenses.

(1)(a) The Rural Development Commission shall consist of members who represent a wide range of rural Nebraska interests.

(b) The Governor shall appoint five members to the commission. The Governor shall appoint a representative of his or her office and the Director of Economic Development or his or her designee, the Director of Agriculture or his or her designee, the chief executive officer of the Department of Health and Human Services or his or her designee, and the Director of the Nebraska State Historical Society or his or her designee.

(c) The Speaker of the Legislature shall appoint one member of the Legislature to the commission. Such member shall be a nonvoting member of the commission.

(d) Other members shall be appointed by the Governor to represent federal agencies, local governments, tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, regional economic development organizations, the private sector, postsecondary education, and youth.

(e) The chairperson and vice-chairperson of the commission shall be elected by a majority of the members of the commission at the first commission meeting in odd-numbered years and shall each serve a two-year term as chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively.

(2) The commission shall meet at the call of the chairperson or a majority of the members. The chairperson shall call such meetings as he or she determines necessary to fulfill the duties of the commission. A quorum shall be one-half of the members.

(3) The members of the commission shall be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses as provided in sections 81-1174 to 81-1177 and pursuant to policies of the commission.

81-3603. Rural Development Commission; duties. The Rural Development Commission shall:

(1) Focus attention on and increase awareness of the opportunities and needs of rural Nebraskans;

(2) Advocate for rural Nebraska by proposing solutions to rural challenges;

(3) Strengthen community sustainability and growth in rural Nebraska through increased community-based wealth creation, expanded economic opportunity, and improved quality of life;

(4) Stimulate rural development innovation and foster information transfer to, from, and within rural Nebraska;

(5) Encourage and support continuity, coordination, and cooperation among national, state, multicomunity, and local rural development initiatives and service providers;

(6) Ensure that rural Nebraskans are afforded the opportunity to determine rural Nebraska's development agenda;

(7) Serve as an advisory body to the Governor, state agencies, and the Legislature on rural development issues;

(8) Establish an information clearinghouse on rural challenges and needs, development services, model initiatives, available resources, and service providers;

(9) Foster community-based development initiatives through multicomunity partnerships;

(10) Support strategic planning and research for and evaluation of rural development initiatives and service providers by administering the Nebraska Development Network Program;

(11) Serve as Nebraska's rural development council within the meaning of the National Rural Development Partnership by providing inventories, reports, assessments, and implementation plans as appropriate; and

(12) Participate in the Partnership for Rural Nebraska.

81-3604. Rural Development Commission; powers. The Rural Development Commission may:

(1) Appoint nonvoting members, obtain advisors, create task forces composed of noncommission members, or engage in other appropriate activities necessary in completing the commission's duties;

(2) Issue reports, recommendations, or other communications as deemed necessary by a majority of voting members of the commission;

(3) Adopt operating procedures and guidelines; and

(4) Engage in other activities relevant and appropriate to its purpose, duties, and powers.

In addition, the commission may receive or apply for and receive gifts, grants, contributions, and other funds from the federal government, private agencies, affiliated associations, and individuals and contract with public and private groups to conduct its business.

81-3605. Rural Development Commission; report. On or before July 1 of each year, the executive director of the Rural Development Commission shall submit to the Department of Economic Development an annual report which includes a summary of the commission's activities, recommendations for future rural development action, and an accounting of the source and use of funds disbursed during the previous fiscal year. The Department of Economic Development shall include such report in the department's annual status report under section 81-1201.11.

81-3607. Nebraska Development Network Program; created; commission; powers and duties. The Nebraska Development Network Program is created in the Rural Development Commission. The commission shall administer the program and may contract for services to carry out the purposes of the Nebraska Development Network Program.

81-3608. Nebraska Development Network Program; programs and strategies. The Nebraska Development Network Program shall create and support community and regional development capacity enhancement programs and strategies throughout Nebraska that:

(1) Recognize shared local, regional, and state responsibility for shaping the community's and the region's economic future and generate and focus public and private resources on effective actions that help communities and businesses to grow and prosper;

(2) Encourage public-private partnerships in order to leverage and enhance public resources through private investment;

(3) Increase the resources directed toward economic development by building support within communities and assisting communities in planning their own economic futures by providing them with comprehensive information about the principles of community and economic development, including the concepts of entrepreneurial communities, strategic planning, leadership training, community development, and effective sustainable economic development; and

(4) Support the work of the Nebraska Development Network regional groups.

81-3609. Legislative findings. The Legislature finds and declares:

(1) That it is a benefit to the state and in the best interest of the citizens of Nebraska to deliver economic and community development services in an integrated and coordinated system through increased community, state, and federal cooperation and collaboration;

(2) That the Partnership for Rural Nebraska is recognized as a strategic partnership between the State of Nebraska, the University of Nebraska, and the United States Department of Agriculture, the purpose of which is to provide a formal structure of organizational collaboration and delivery of rural economic and community development resources and programs to Nebraska's rural communities;

(3) That the Partnership for Rural Nebraska has earned national recognition as a model for cooperative and collaborative delivery of services; and

(4) That it encourages the continued participation of the State of Nebraska, through the Department of Economic Development, the Rural Development Commission, and the University of Nebraska, in the Partnership for Rural Nebraska.