
FUTUREFORCE

NEBRASKA

Prepare today for a dynamic future.

PATHWAYS



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Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of the FutureForce Nebraska newsletter, designed to keep everyone involved in the effort to develop Nebraska's workforce informed. This is where you can share information on upcoming events as well as find out what is going on in other pathways. Plus, we'll be looking to you to impart your pathway committee's great ideas on how to move forward.

Executive Committee Report

The Executive Committee met on February 8 at the Bellevue College Lincoln campus. Randy Vlasin was welcomed as the new FutureForce Executive Director. Seth Derner reported on the Nebraska Scholars Program and called for the creation of a steering committee to oversee the program. The Committee discussed the formation of a FutureForce Nebraska 501C3 non-profit organization and the formation of a FutureForce Nebraska non-profit organization affiliated with an existing 501C3. A subcommittee was appointed to investigate the two options in more depth. The meeting closed with brief discussion regarding ongoing financial support for FutureForce and the Nebraska Scholars Program. The next meeting will be March 15, at 9:30 a.m. at the Bellevue University Lincoln Campus.

Steering Committee Report

The Steering Committee met following the Executive Committee on February 8. Each of the pathway committees represented gave updates on current activities. Common challenges to pathway committee work are lack of funding and confusion about how to proceed with the roll out. One suggestion for helping with roll out issues was to tap into networks already in place. Utilizing existing frameworks makes the roll out much easier to facilitate.

Donna Vrbka from the Department of Education discussed the need to get parents involved in career decision making as partners with their children. In conjunction with Education Quest, they have developed a brochure designed to help parents understand the career cluster model. That brochure will be distributed in nine pilot schools.

Kent Mann, principal at Grand Island Senior High, spoke about the need to develop active mentoring partnerships with the business community. In Grand Island, they are working on creating those partnerships and identifying the common strands or skills 21st century employers want in their employees. Identifying those skills is the first step toward providing a skilled workforce.

Director Update

I will begin this "Director Update" with two introductions. First, for those whom I have not had the pleasure of meeting, my name is Randy Vlasin and I look forward to serving as Executive Director for FutureForce Nebraska. I am a native Nebraskan and spent my youth growing up on a small farm near Hayes Center. My professional career includes both business and education. I spent 24 years as an Agricultural Education instructor (one year at Wilber and the remainder at Chase County Schools in Imperial). I have also been involved in our family greenhouse business for the past 10 years. My wife Donna and I have three sons; Jeremy, 25; Matt, 23; and Adam, 22.

The second introduction relates to our new FutureForce communication entitled Pathways. Presently, we plan this publication as a monthly newsletter to convey information from executive board meetings, steering committees, and other news relating to FutureForce Nebraska activities. It is our hope that Pathways will assist to inform and strengthen ties among the many partners involved with the work of FutureForce Nebraska.

Several important topics highlight this update. During the FutureForce executive board meeting on February 8, the decision was made to proceed with establishing FutureForce Nebraska as a nonprofit organization and to explore the option of affiliating with the Nebraska Community Foundation. Through incorporating as a nonprofit organization, the avenues for funding are opened along with creating a sustainable foundation for continuing the work of FutureForce.

Also presented at the board meeting was a draft structural design for carrying out the vision of FutureForce. This structure includes four major divisions. 1) Worker/Career Pathways – Promote career awareness and employment opportunities for K-12, postsecondary, and adults; coordinate curriculum alignment in secondary, postsecondary, and workforce development/adult programs; and partner

with economic development and workforce development initiatives to create a pipeline of qualified workers for targeted Nebraska industries. 2) Nebraska Scholars Program – Promote academic and workplace readiness in preparation for career success. 3) Nebraska Career Connections – Provides an online career planning and management tool for students, educators, job seekers, and employers. 4) Professional Development Consortium – Coordinate, develop, and provide resources that include professional development and training, skill assessments, and quality data to K-12, postsecondary education, and workforce development/economic development entities.

I believe now is the opportune time to strengthen the connections between the partners of education, government, and business and industry. As an educator, I always felt there was an unnecessary gap between education and the world of work. During my years as a teacher, I worked closely with the business world to enhance the classroom experience and viewed business and industry as the customers of education. My charge was training the future workers and entrepreneurs. As a small business partner, I experienced first hand the challenge of finding skilled workers and believe that by working together, education and business can help to provide a skilled workforce to meet the needs of Nebraska businesses. The ultimate beneficiaries of this process will be the people and the economy of Nebraska. I look forward to this work and to fostering the relationships necessary for this important task.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Seth Derner for the excellent work he accomplished as Executive Director. Seth may have moved into a new arena, but I know he will only be a phone call or email away. Seth, we wish you the best in your new endeavors.

Randy Vlasin, Executive Director
FutureForce Nebraska