

NU CONNECTIONS

Links Businesses to Resources Across Four University of Nebraska Campuses

NU Connections is a collaborative economic development initiative that brings together all four University of Nebraska campuses and opens the door to the wide array of programs, services and resources that Nebraska businesses can utilize to grow and diversify.

Funded by a \$560,000 grant through the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) 2018 University Center Economic Development Competition, NU Connections is administered by the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC), headquartered at the University of Nebraska at Omaha College of Business Administration with offices and consultants throughout the state.

NBDC will administer the grant, with all four campuses - UNO, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center - participating in program leadership and development, says Catherine Lang, NBDC state director.

"The key point of NU Connections is to connect the university campuses in a concerted effort to promote the multitude of resources we have in place for Nebraska businesses in order to support and expand economic development statewide," Lang says. "Whether it is a program or service, a facility or laboratory, a faculty asset

or a source of funding, we want to help find the best tool for each business, even if it is outside the university system."

NU Connections makes every effort to help simplify the process for businesses seeking developmental resources. The program has an Industry Liaison Officer (ILO), a single point of contact, at each of the university research campuses to help businesses and others identify and utilize university resources and navigate processes. In addition to Lang, those liaisons include Harold Sargus at NBDC and UNO, Deanna Marcelino at UNO, Michael Dixon at UNMC, Sara Bennett at UNK and Ryan Anderson at UNL.

NU Connections was launched in 2018 and proved its value for Nebraska businesses hit hard by the following spring floods, Lang says.

Because many businesses were caught unprepared for such a disaster, NBDC and NU Connections is developing a 90-minute online instructional module designed to create awareness of what a business needs in place to respond to a major disruption.

Sargus, manager of professional and organizational development at NBDC, says the online resource draws upon the educational components of the Emergency Preparedness

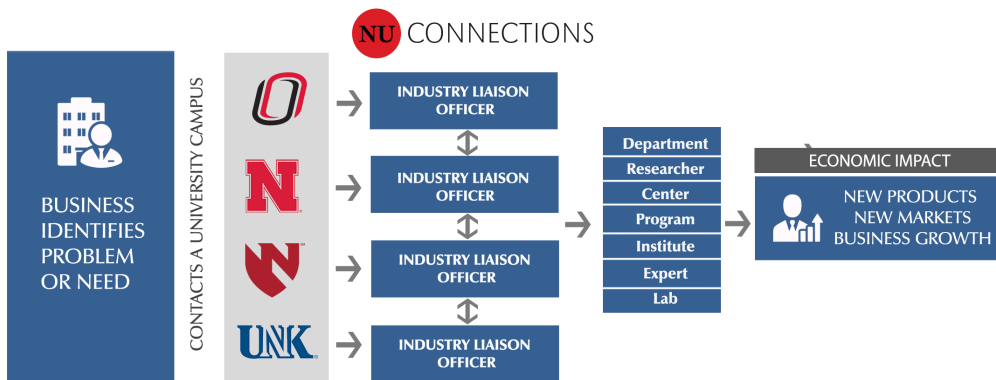
and Business Continuity workshop series, a collaborative program of NBDC, the National Safety Council, Nebraska, and the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI) at the University of Nebraska.

"The online module will provide viewers with a comprehensive overview of what a business needs to have in place to ensure continuity of operations and sustainability in a disaster," Sargus says. "Whether you have four employees or 200, this resource will be valuable to you. And, when you want to learn more about what you can do to keep your business up and running, give us a call."

Lang says NU Connections is eager to add partners to help build upon the collaborative foundation it has established for Nebraska businesses. "Our team has added the University of Nebraska Foundation, because of its work with donors and businesses statewide, and the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Teaching, Research, and Inquiry-based Learning (TRAIL) Center at UNO," she says.

"NU Connections will increase opportunities for research collaboration, technology and product development, talent and workforce development, and partnerships with Nebraska businesses and economic development stakeholders," she says, "all of which strengthens the university's support of statewide economic and business development."

Lang says the university's primary purpose is to create talent. "This extends from the classroom to internships, capstone projects, and hands-on, real-world learning opportunities that bring students and business together," she says. "Businesses across the state are looking for talent, and the University of Nebraska is positioned to provide talent by building the relationships with businesses that move Nebraska forward."



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