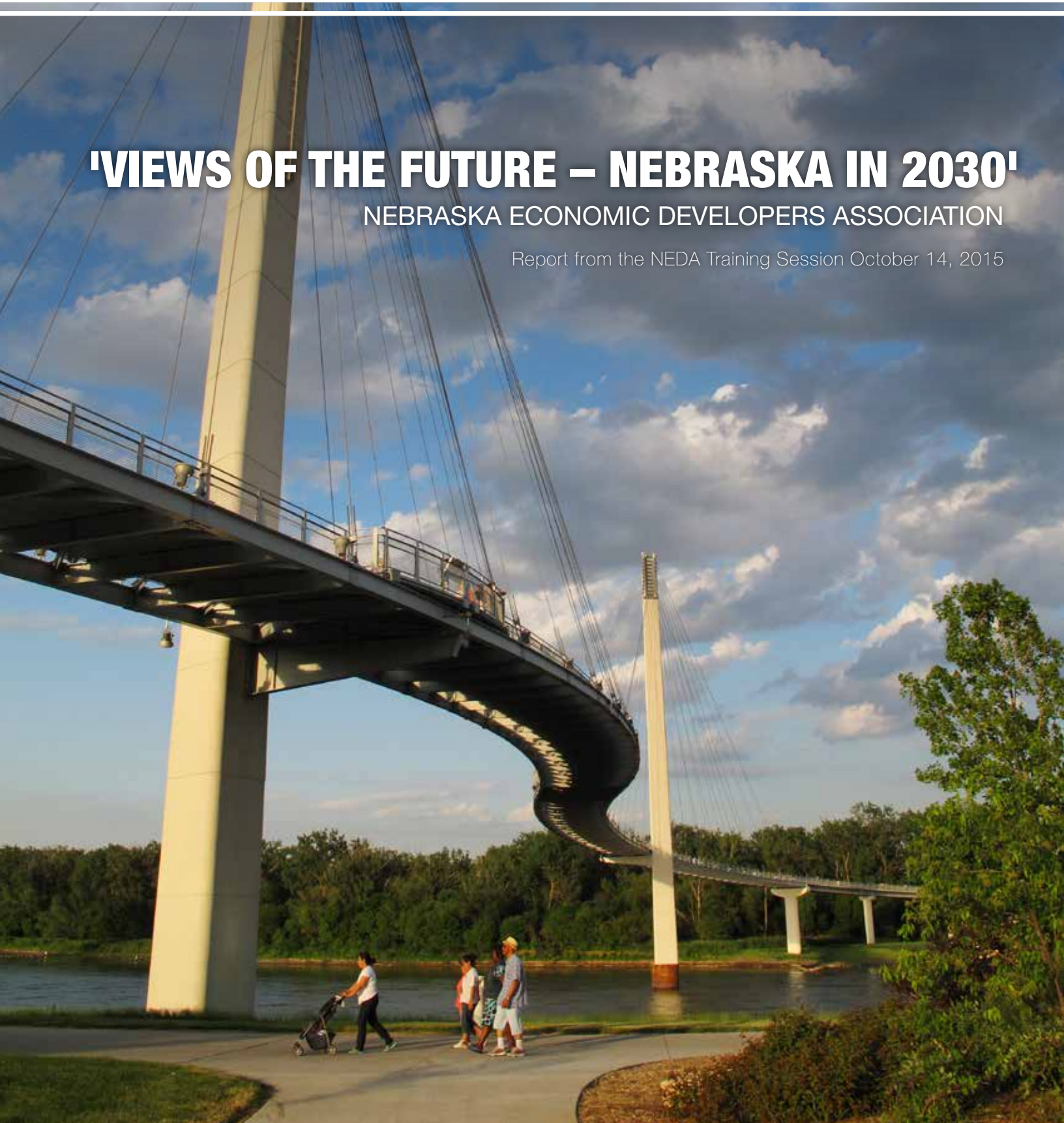


# 'VIEWS OF THE FUTURE – NEBRASKA IN 2030'

NEBRASKA ECONOMIC DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION

Report from the NEDA Training Session October 14, 2015



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Report from the **NEDA Training Session October 14, 2015**

This report summarizes the deliberations at the all-day NEDA training session held in Kearney, Nebraska on 14 October 2015. Approximately 70 members of the Nebraska Economic Developers Association participated in the workshop and developed the scenarios presented in this report

PREPARED BY:



HOSTED BY:



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Foreword .....	4
2.0	Introduction .....	5
2.1	Scenario-based future ‘Think-Tank’ .....	5
2.2	Developing Four Plausible Scenarios for the Future .....	6
2.3	Scenario Matrix – Views of the Future .....	7
3.0	Scenario A – Nebraska Nice .....	8
4.0	Scenario B – Collaboration and Innovation .....	10
5.0	Scenario C – Combine Zone .....	12
6.0	Scenario D – Status Quo .....	14
7.0	Preferred and Expected Futures.....	16
8.0	Implications and Next Steps .....	17
9.0	About Future iQ Partners .....	18
10.0	More Information about NEDA .....	19



## 1.0 FOREWORD



### VIEWS OF THE FUTURE – NEBRASKA IN 2030

What will our Nebraska communities and our state look like in five, ten, twenty or even fifty years from now? The choices and the projects we take on today will impact what we see tomorrow in our communities and industries. Are we creating places that foster greater collaboration and innovation, or are we okay with the status quo?

Recently approximately 70 NEDA members and stakeholders from across the state gathered for an 'outside the box' workshop to answer those kinds of questions. It was a professional development workshop where we explored future choices based on what we thought was best for our community and our industries. We also had an opportunity to think into the future and envision how we want Nebraska to look in 2030.

While this workshop was limited to one day, it opened the door wide for NEDA to continue having these conversations. We can help be the catalysts for positive change in our communities.

The following report represents the collective deliberations from the workshop participants. NEDA is presenting this report in the hope that it will capture the spirit of the discussions, and act as a springboard for further discussion about the future of our State, profession, industries and communities.

Nicole Sedlacek  
NEDA President  
October 2015





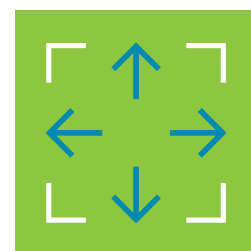
## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

The scenario planning work and results presented in this report was conducted with the Nebraska Economic Developers Association (NEDA) in Kearney, Nebraska on 14 October 2015. This all-day workshop was attended by approximately 70 professional economic developers and stakeholders from across the State. This workshop was part of the professional development program for members of NEDA.

### 2.1 SCENARIO-BASED FUTURE 'THINK-TANK'

NEDA contracted Future iQ Partners to design and deliver a one-day future orientated 'Think-Tank' workshop. Future iQ Partners' Scenario Planning process, called Decision Path, provides a method to explore plausible futures, and consider the implications of various future scenarios. This workshop aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making.
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape Nebraska over the next 10 to 20 years.
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for the State.
- Begin exploring alignment around a shared future vision.



**DecisionPath**

SCENARIO  
PLANNING

The scenarios developed during this Scenario Planning process, and outlined in this report are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications. In addition, the workshop deliberations can assist in identifying key actions for the NEDA and assist in identifying how various groups might best contribute to future developments. The design of the workshop included a presentation and discussion about key forces shaping the future, at a global and local level. These exercises and work were aimed to build a robust basis for the scenario formulation.

The participants were then guided through a Scenario Planning process to develop four plausible scenarios for the future of the State. The process, involved exploration and discussion of global, regional, and local trends and forces of change; development of a scenario matrix defining four plausible scenarios spaces for the future; and, the development of descriptive narratives of each scenario. The event concluded with discussion of the scenarios and their desirability in terms of future outcomes.



## 2.2 DEVELOPING FOUR PLAUSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE

Workshop participants were presented with a scenario matrix, defined by two major axes of 'Industry Diversification' and 'Regional Collaboration' (see diagram). Brief descriptions were also attached to the end points of each driver axes. While these end points do not necessarily represent two extremes on a linear continuum, they are distinct enough to suggest some degree of separation and a plausible range of outcomes between them. The four quadrants (scenario spaces) based on different combinations of the two cluster themes, were reviewed and discussed with the workshop participants. This discussion explored the description of the end points included in each scenario space, the possible interaction between these drivers, and how they formed the axes that defined the four scenario spaces. The participants were asked to consider the main attributes of each of the quadrants and to begin to speculate about how Nebraska would look in a future based on each of the quadrants.

Event participants were randomly allocated to one of four groups and asked to formulate a scenario for their respective quadrant. Each group described Nebraska in 2030 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given in terms of the triple-bottom line of business and sector profile; workforce and community profile; and, economic development ecosystem characteristics.

In addition, they were asked to devise major events or headlines of how the scenario occurred using the years 2020, and 2030 and to give their scenario a descriptive name. Once the scenarios had been developed, each group reported back, describing their scenario to the other workshop participants. Each group's notes for their scenario and the description were used to produce the detailed narrative for each scenario that is presented in the next section of this report.





## 2.3 SCENARIO MATRIX – VIEWS OF THE FUTURE

The scenario matrix showing the names of each scenario as described by the workshop participants.



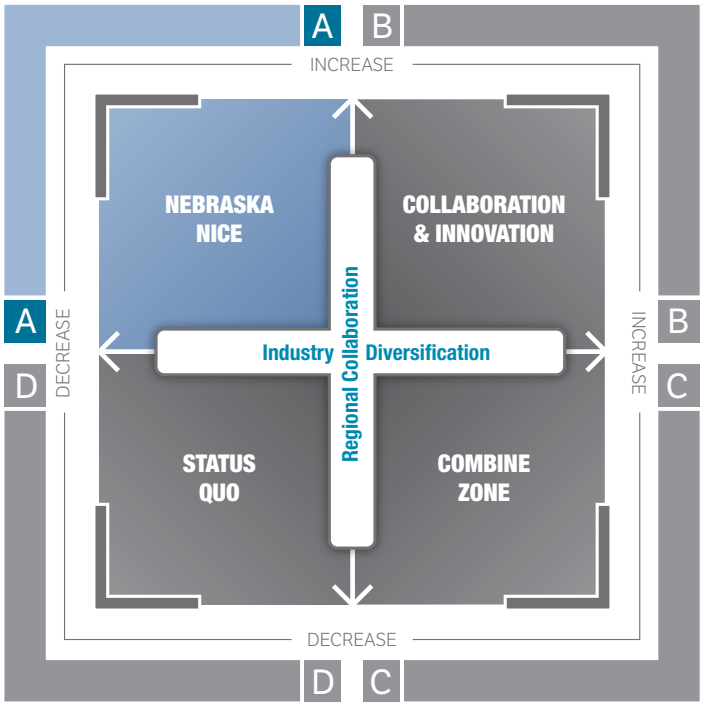
These four scenarios paint very different plausible futures for Nebraska. The workshop participants considered them all as largely plausible futures, as in, they could actually happen. Narratives and descriptions of each scenario, as developed by the workshop participants, are included in the following section. Each scenario has its subsequent consequences and impacts on the fabric of Nebraska – impacting the community, economy, organizational fabric in different ways. No one future is the 'perfect' future, as each comes with its attendant challenges and implications. The process, however, does provide a way to tease out the future scenarios and examine them from a speculative standpoint. They represent different possibilities for the future, and are not predictions.





### 3.0 SCENARIO A – NEBRASKA NICE

Nebraska Nice – Through increased collaborative effort, current Nebraska industries succeed because of technology improvements. But, lack of diversification makes us vulnerable to external forces & changes. Technology improvements lead to higher skilled and higher paying jobs but lessens the demand for employees creating a stagnant environment for population growth.







## SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS - 2030

### Business and Industry Sectors

- Still a focus on agriculture & manufacturing.
- Technology improvements will increase capacity but decrease the number of jobs needed – everyone does it the same way because of stale collaboration.
- Higher yields are achieved by genetic enhanced animal production & farming.
- More automated procedures in both industries.

### Workforce and Community Profile

- More 'higher-skilled' workers, but less numbers of jobs.
- Population growth stagnates.
- More investment in technology infrastructure and automation.
- Some ability to maintain a good quality of life.
- Regional collaboration helps increase investment in education and training.
- Lack of industry diversification leads to lack of population diversification.

### Economic Development 'Eco-System'

- Business & education systems work together to balance needs (public-private partnership)
- The State maintains water levels but we are able to produce twice as much through technology improvements.
- Market has sole dependence – vulnerable to external threats if markets waiver in geographical & socio-economic regions.
- Economy can't weather economy dips as easily because of lack of diversity.



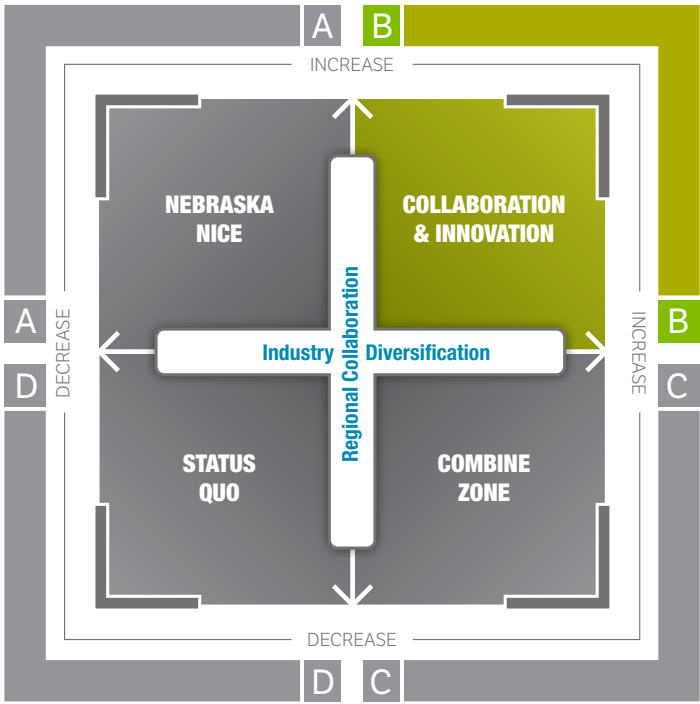
## NEBRASKA NICE – HEADLINE NEWS

	2020	2030
<b>Business and Industry Sectors</b>	<i>"Biotechnology doubles crop yields."</i>	<i>"Mooooove – over for Technology: 3 times annual calving rates is the new standard."</i>
<b>Workforce and Community</b>	<i>"Nebraska implements state-wide re-tooling program."</i>	<i>"Training programs lead to higher wages but less jobs."</i>
<b>Economic Development 'Eco-System'</b>	<i>"Fences to consensus' -communities working together."</i>	<i>"Second country refuses Nebraska GMO beef imports."</i>



# 4.0 SCENARIO B – COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Collaboration and Innovation – There is movement toward more regional thinking with a sense of place. Nebraska is utilizing research breakthroughs to drive new export friendly industries: power generation technology and transmission biotechnology (food production, food processing, medicine). This allows for population growth, particularly through in-migration and a more resilient and diversified economy.





## SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS - 2030

**Business and  
Industry Sectors**

- Focus on value-added agricultural and food research.
- Strong production of research based biotechnology.
- Strong sector growth in applied research medicine, agriculture, food processing, power generation, mechanization and robotics.
- Two-pronged economic approach: exporting food ingredients and research globally; regional applied manufacturing and agriculture technology

**Workforce and  
Community Profile**

- Stronger move to regional and consolidated governments.
- There are fewer communities, although still many small second class cities, and large villages and townships.
- Highly educated and specialized population, with people being 'career mobile' but location stable through technology.

**Economic Development  
'Eco-System'**

- Nebraska has a forward-thinking education sector, that has proactive education programs based on projected needs and research, rather than immediate job openings.
- Stronger community mindset with emphasis on 'connection to place', with a broader regional interest and collaboration.

## COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION – HEADLINE NEWS

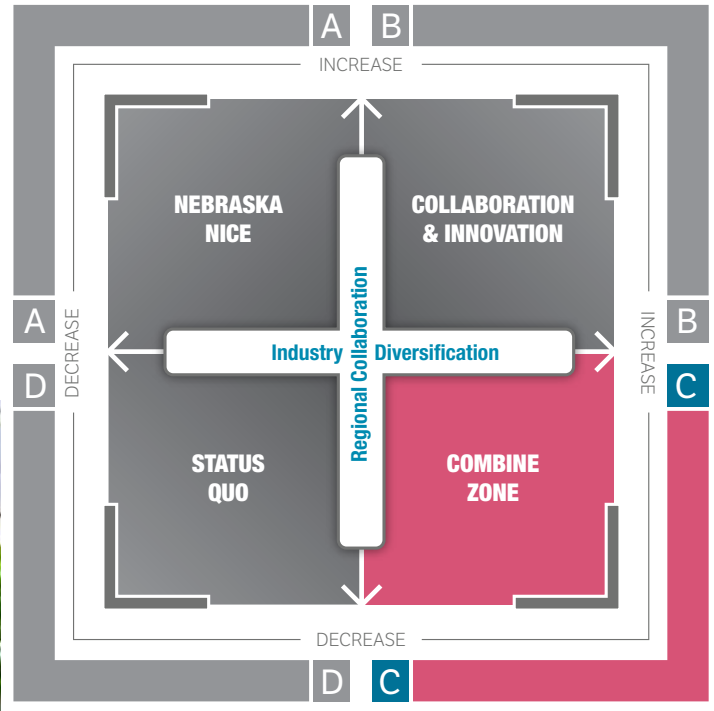
	2020	2030
<b>Business and Industry Sectors</b>	<p>"UNL named No. 1 International leader in applied engineering."</p> <p>"Students develop first medical monitor on nanoscale."</p>	<p>"Nebraska doubles the value of agricultural exports."</p> <p>"Nebraska public telecommunications provides free broadband fiber to every home."</p>
<b>Workforce and Community</b>	<p>"Nebraska is an immigration friendly state."</p> <p>"Counties consolidate into 40 regional governments, and school Boards promote administrative consolidation with local facilities."</p>	<p>"Nebraska tops national statistics for educational level achieved and median income."</p> <p>"Huskers recognized for decade of National Championships."</p>
<b>Economic Development 'Eco-System'</b>	<p>"Nebraska offers investment incentives to businesses, including support network for first five years of operation."</p>	<p>"Nebraska eliminates property taxes."</p> <p>"Agri-tourism in Nebraska is recognized as international destination."</p>





# 5.0 SCENARIO C – COMBINE ZONE

Combine Zone - Industry diversification drives the economy toward a ‘Nebraska Technology Food Zone’. However, a lack of collaborative behavior results in uneven distribution of benefits, and more economic power accumulates with large multinational operators. Fragmented efforts to coordinate public efforts results in declining competitiveness in research and development.





## SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS - 2030

### Business and Industry Sectors

- Strong emergence of a food technology sector, incorporating new food production methods such as 3D food printing.
- Nebraska food will gain a premium, building in the true value of resources such as water and energy. This will drive competitive advantage to plant based food products, with animal based extracting high premium.
- Widespread automation in agriculture and associated food industries, with development of new advanced food ingredient based industries.
- Technology and innovative drive agricultural sector that is climate adaptive and maximizing genetic modified production, but is dominated by a few large multinational operators.

### Workforce and Community Profile

- Smaller communities suffer, as the regional centers and urban locations outcompete them for resources and business attraction.
- Strong demand for specialized skills in food technology, plant breeding, genetic research, engineering and automation.
- Communities and workforce split into the 'haves and have-nots' with those lacking technical skills and capacity falling behind, while those areas that have technical capability become more attractive for new investment and high-technology industry.

### Economic Development 'Eco-System'

- Lack of regional collaboration leads to fragmented economic development, with organizations operating in silos and competing for resources.
- There is less power and influence of local economic development groups, as increasingly decisions are made by larger investors and firms, often located outside Nebraska.
- There are attempts to support Entrepreneurial capacity and start-ups, but these programs are hit and miss, due too lack of coordinated delivery.



## COMBINE ZONE – HEADLINE NEWS

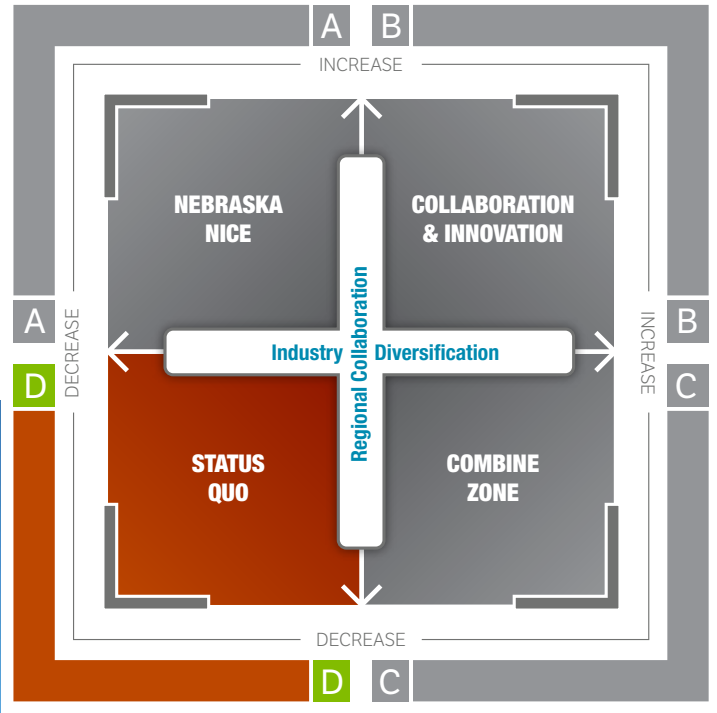
	2020	2030
<b>Business and Industry Sectors</b>	<i>"Consolidation of farms continues at record pace, as large agribusiness firms build mega-farms."</i>	<i>"Nebraska food technology businesses booming, leading the market in 3D food printing."</i>
<b>Workforce and Community</b>	<i>"Education shifts focus to meet emerging specialized needs of advanced food industries."</i>	<i>"Automation drives unskilled workers out of jobs; smaller communities struggle to survive."</i>
<b>Economic Development 'Eco-System'</b>	<i>"Nebraska has lowest taxes in country attracting large firms looking for 'tax and business friendly' locations."</i>	<i>"Nebraska emerges as the 'Protein Powder' State; but employment figures look anemic."</i>



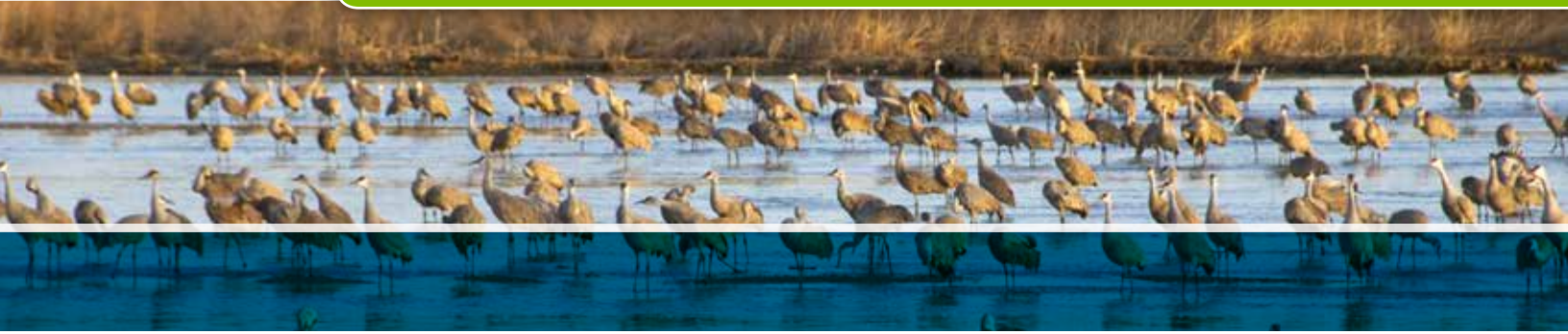


# 6.0 SCENARIO D – STATUS QUO

Status Quo – Life is good. We work hard to maintain what we have, and train our people to follow an established pattern. The economy and society evolve slowly, and we address change only when absolutely necessary, often leaving it too late to take effective action.







## SCENARIO CHARACTERISTICS - 2030

### Business and Industry Sectors

- Industry sectors and profiles stay much the same.
- Business apply more technology to drive efficiency
- Less startups, but existing large businesses expand taking advantage of global demand.
- Less local ownership of large industries - Nebraska now more a production, storage and distribution center instead of innovating.

### Workforce and Community Profile

- Nebraska has an aging population and workforce
- Difficult to support business attraction strategies – as industries become more automated and centralized.
- Struggle with aging facilities, resulting in deferred maintenance, loss of amenities, and decline of small business sector.
- Declining population results in strained health care services, and declining school enrollments and funding.

### Economic Development 'Eco-System'

- Economic development driven by a reactive environment.
- There is a lack of regional collaboration for economic or community development, increasing competition for scarce investment opportunities.
- Momentum stalls as there is a lack of critical mass for innovation and public support of local economic development.



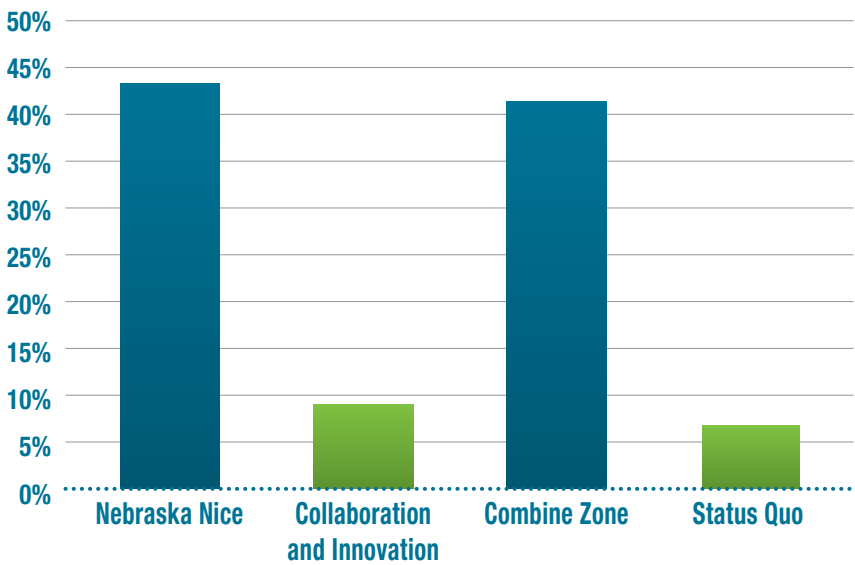
## STATUS QUO – HEADLINE NEWS

	2020	2030
<b>Business and Industry Sectors</b>	<i>"Nebraska business incorporate new automation technologies in response to declining workforce."</i>	<i>"Nebraska businesses begin to lose as talent leave and heads to brighter future."</i>
<b>Workforce and Community</b>	<i>"Local employers struggling to recruit new trained workforce." "Cities seeking new City managers."</i>	<i>"Local grocery stores and downtown retailers seek buyers for vacated buildings." "City looking to auctioning library and parks."</i>
<b>Economic Development 'Eco-System'</b>	<i>"Community struggling to adapt to plant closing and population loss."</i>	<i>"Taxes on the rise due to compensate for population loss and aging infrastructure."</i>

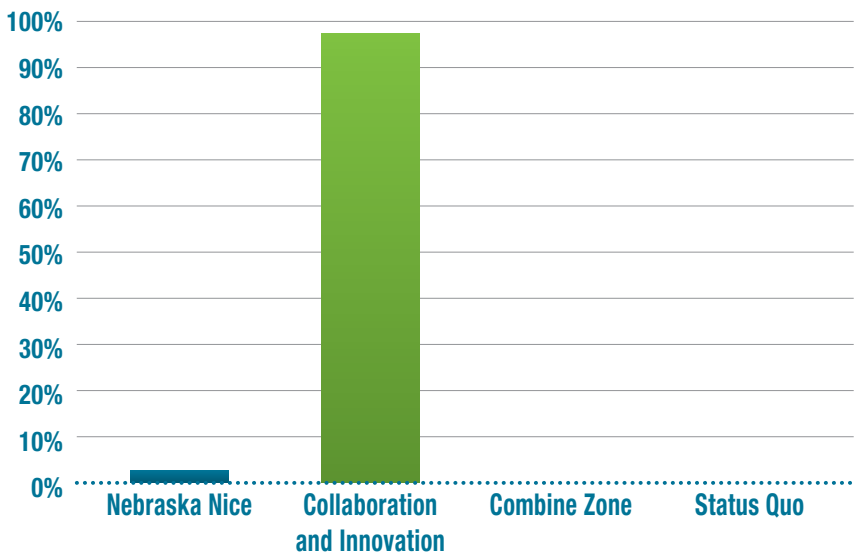


# 7.0 PREFERRED AND EXPECTED FUTURES

The four scenarios presented represent a range of plausible outcomes for Nebraska's future future. Think tank participants were asked a series of questions regarding their views of the preferred and expected future. The expected future is the one they deemed most likely to eventuate if there is no change in the current trajectory.



While each of these scenarios were viewed as plausible, think tank participants expressed a clear preference for one of the presented outcomes, being 'Collaboration and Innovation'.





## 8.0 IMPLICATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The workshop participants discussed the ramifications and implications of failing to achieve the preferred future. The workshop noted that while there was a very high alignment of people that 'Collaboration and Innovation' represented the preferred future scenario, very few people thought that was the current trajectory.

The workshop discussed what it believed the next steps should be, and how NEDA could move forward. The following key themes emerged in the discussion:

- There is a need for NEDA to be an advocate for real discussion that tackle the tough issues. There is a need for meaningful discussion about how small communities will have to confront tough choices and look to collaboration in order to survive in the long term.
- NEDA has the opportunity to develop a vision and mission, and be a future-focused organization that has a strong voice and advocacy for new thinking about economic development. The organization should continue with future-orientated workshops, to educate and inform membership, elected officials and key industry stakeholders.
- Need to create a stronger organization, that has a role in policy and the discussion about the future of Nebraska. This will require greater connections between members and developing a strong plan for NEDA.

It was concluded that NEDA has the opportunity to be a catalyst for a new conversation that looks to the future. Failure for the State to embrace and guide change is likely to see a 'Status Quo' type future, that will be a negative for many communities and businesses.





## 9.0 ABOUT FUTURE IQ PARTNERS

Future iQ Partners is a market leader in the development and application of scenario planning; network analysis, industry and regional analysis, and community engagement and capacity building. We specialize in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. We take a practical, hands-on approach to working with groups and communities. With over a decade of business experience, the company has grown to have a global clientele spanning three continents.

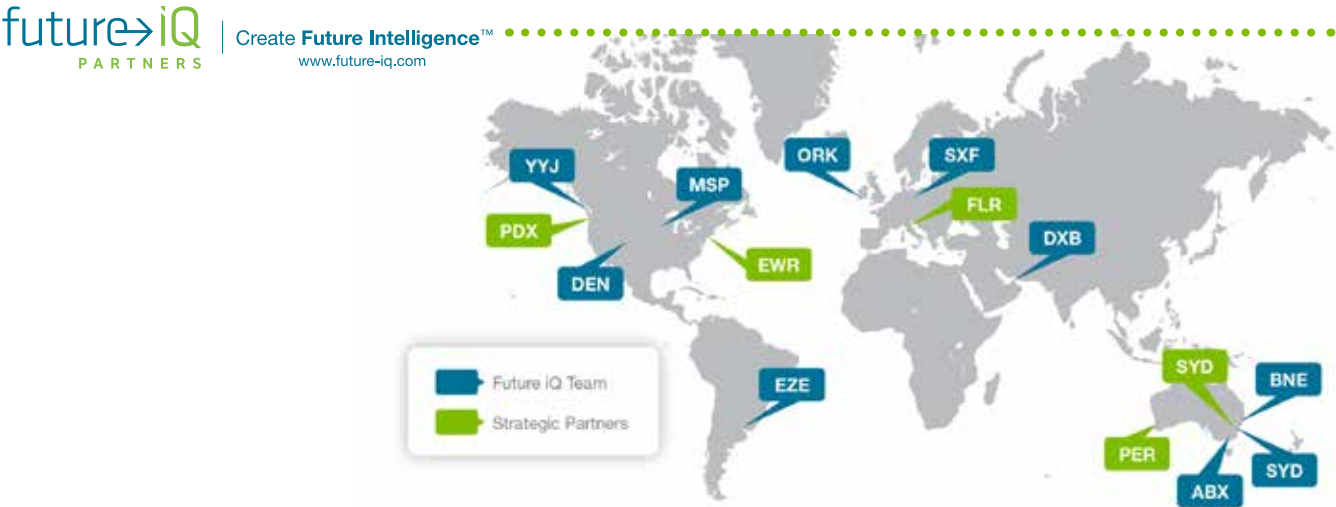
To learn more about Future iQ Partners, and our recent projects visit [www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com) or by email at [info@future-iq.com](mailto:info@future-iq.com)

### REPORT AND SCENARIO PLANNING WORKSHOP PREPARED BY:



**DAVID BEURLE, CEO FUTURE IQ PARTNERS**

As CEO of Future iQ Partners, David specializes in creating future planning approaches for the use in regional, community and organizational settings. David has worked in the field of organizational and regional economic and community planning for over 20 years. His work in community and economic development has earned his work international, national and state awards.





## 10.0 MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NEDA

NEDA is an association of professional economic developers dedicated to the prosperous growth of Nebraska's business climate. NEDA's purpose is to foster economic development in Nebraska, encourage the advancement of the expertise of its members, foster cooperation among economic development professionals, and to afford professional economic developers a vehicle for assembly and collective expression.

### **For more information on NEDA, please contact:**

#### **DeEtta Hartman**

NEDA Executive Director

318 East 19th Street

Cozad, NE 69130

Tel: (308) 784-3809

E-mail: [cdhart@cozadtel.net](mailto:cdhart@cozadtel.net)



