



Contact Us  
mburke@west-central-nebraska.com  
308.284.6077



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## RFI Accepting Applications for Student Serviceship Program

LINCOLN, NEB – September 20, 2017 – Calling all Nebraska communities! The Rural Futures Institute (RFI) at the University of Nebraska (NU) is accepting community applications for 2018 RFI Student Serviceship, a program that places high-capacity NU students throughout the state to work, live and serve. The application deadline is Nov. 20, 2017.

A hybrid between service learning and traditional internships, “serviceships” provide communities with tangible results on important self-defined projects while giving students resume-building work and insight into the career and life opportunities in rural places.

“This program is designed to help motivated communities move critical strategies and projects forward,” said RFI Founding Executive Director Chuck Schroeder. “We select and train some of the University’s most ambitious student leaders—the biggest thinkers, highest achievers and most enthusiastic doers—so rural communities can reach their goals. And, with stellar students and partners, we have accomplished meaningful results.”

Since 2013, 38 NU students have worked and served in 19 Nebraska communities for a total estimated economic impact of \$331,590. They have also logged 581 volunteer hours at an estimated impact of \$13,688.

The students, who are recruited by RFI from a variety of disciplines at all four NU campuses, complete a rigorous one-week training course with NU faculty and community leaders, preparing them to serve in many roles with entities throughout a community.

Through the application process, rural community host teams articulate their community's vision and purpose while scoping and defining projects for intern pairs to work on and lead during the 10-week summer internship. Host teams, which include subject-matter experts and leadership mentors, must also identify funding for the students' stipends, housing, office space and materials. Communities are supported throughout the process by RFI and Nebraska Community Foundation.

"All communities should take advantage of the opportunity," said 2017 community host team member Madonna Mogul, Executive Director of the York Chamber of Commerce. "I think it's important as communities and business leaders that we work with these young men and women who will eventually be our leaders and our bosses. This program is a way we can work toward retaining young leaders in our state."

Details and application are available at <http://ruralfutures.nebraska.edu/serviceship/>



## WCNDD's Fenwick Now a Certified CDBG Grant Administrator

Cody Fenwick has recently completed her training with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development in Lincoln to become a Certified CDBG Grant Administrator. She is looking forward to the opportunity to assist our communities on any upcoming CDBG projects, whether it be for a planning, public works, housing, water/wastewater, or downtown revitalization project.

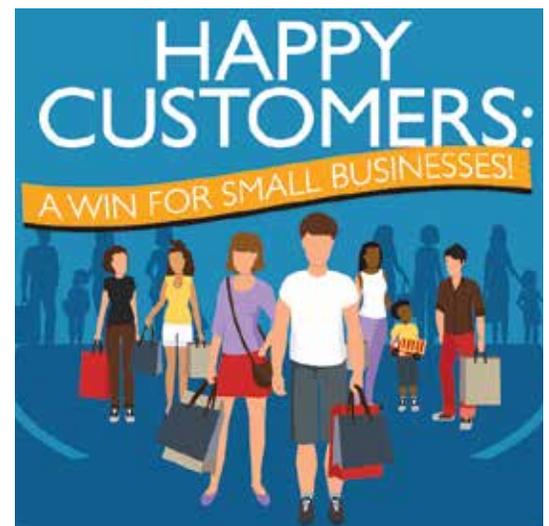
As a certified administrator she will be the person in charge of the project on a day-to-day basis, ensuring the grantee/community meets all federal and state laws, regulations, and policies that are relevant to the project.

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## Customer Service is More Important Than Ever

As a small business owner it can be very difficult to compete with larger competitors that have a hold on the market and are able to offer reduced prices due to high sales volume. One aspect that can enhance the small business shopping experience is to focus on great customer service.

Always emphasizing customer experience is a valuable tool that comes at little to no cost to the business owner. It not only plays a part in retaining customers, but also in improving the overall bottom line. "Customer experience is predicted to overtake price and product as the key brand differentiator by 2020, according to a 2013 report on B2B companies by Walker Information." Creating a solid connection to your existing customer base through positive customer service solidifies loyalty and with that comes the willingness to pay extra to have a more personalized shopping experience.



For more information on the benefits of great customer service,  
<https://www.score.org/blog/improving-your-customer-service-more-important-ever>

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# #whatshappeningWCNDD

What are you doing this year? Send us your pictures to [mburke@west-central-nebraska.com](mailto:mburke@west-central-nebraska.com) with the hashtag #whatshappeningWCNDD and we might feature them in our newsletter. Meanwhile, see if you can guess where this is ...

## Outdoor Recreation Funding Available

The Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) stateside assistance grant program has provided funding for community outdoor recreation projects across Nebraska for nearly 40 years. Eligible applicants may include a city, village, county, natural resource district or other political subdivision. Examples of eligible projects include: playgrounds, picnic facilities, trails, ballfields, soccer fields, shelter houses, tennis courts, multi-purpose courts and modest related support facilities. Acquisition of land for a new park or for land that is adjacent to an existing park is eligible for Fund assistance. Land to be donated by a private individual or a corporation after federal project approval is also eligible for Fund assistance. Professional consultant services to prepare the application or provide cost estimates are eligible for Fund assistance.

All proposed projects must meet priority outdoor recreation needs as identified in the current Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): A Guide to an Active Nebraska (2016 – 2020) to be eligible for grant assistance. Priorities can be found in Chapter Six: Action Plan for Nebraska.

The LWCF is a reimbursable grant, meaning the project sponsor must finance 100 percent of project costs as they are incurred. The sponsor may then request reimbursement for half of all eligible expenses up to the amount of the approved grant. To be eligible for reimbursement, all costs must be incurred and paid by the project sponsor during the project period as identified on the grant agreement. Project sponsors may not take title to land or begin development until after the project is approved by the National Park Service.

Expenses for planning and engineering which are necessary to prepare the proposal for submission are eligible project costs if they are documented as pre-agreement costs in the application. These are the only eligible pre-agreement costs. If any other work is performed or title to land is accepted prior to federal approval of the project, the expenses incurred are ineligible for reimbursement or match.

If this is of interest to your community, contact CJ Poltack today to discuss potential projects your community may have in mind. In order to be eligible, your City Council/Village Board will be required to pass a resolution at a public meeting to participate in the LWCF program, complete an application form by October 13, 2017, and supply all requested supplemental information as required by staff.

[http://outdoornebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/formidable/LWCF-Application-FY2017\\_Fillable.pdf](http://outdoornebraska.gov/wp-content/uploads/formidable/LWCF-Application-FY2017_Fillable.pdf)

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### **Important Deadlines:**

Land and Water Conservation Fund Application

October 13, 2017

Rural Futures Community Application

November 15, 2017

CDBG Water & Waste Water

Open Cycle

2018 Nebraska Passport Application

December 2017