# NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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4-H Leaders, Educators, Community Leaders, and Future Entrepreneurs

As Nebraska and the nation embark on creating a dynamic economy for the 21st century, research and global trends strongly indicate the importance of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship as keys to our future. The distribution of Nebraska's population across a large geographic area poses unique challenges, but every challenge offers opportunities.

Entrepreneurship has been identified as an important career pathway for citizens of all ages, but especially for our youth. Entrepreneurial literacy has also been identified as a 21st century skill in various groundbreaking reports. The Nebraska 4-H EntrepreneurShip Investigation (ESI) curriculum spotlights both.

Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial literacy enhance opportunities and the economic viability of our communities whether they are rural or urban. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education are critical to growing our economy, retaining and attracting back our young people, as well as creating a "line of succession" for current businesses. Because of this, the Nebraska Department of Education began partnering with other state agencies, public and private postsecondary institutions, and the business community to focus on entrepreneurship through the Nebraska Entrepreneurship Task Force (NET-Force) in 2005. Assisting in the creation of relevant and engaging curricula at all levels is a major goal of the task force.

Entrepreneurship education can and *should* be viewed as a lifelong learning process. The Lifelong Learning Model created by the Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education is based on the belief that entrepreneurs go through stages in their learning and earning lives. This model and the national content standards for entrepreneurship education have been the basis of curriculum development in our state, including the work of Nebraska 4-H. These standards have been cross-walked to the Nebraska STARS (academic) standards and are referenced in each unit in the **E**ntrepreneur**S**hip **I**nvestigation (ESI) curriculum.

Since Nebraska 4-H included the Nebraska Department of Education in their efforts to create entrepreneurship curriculum that could be used by local leaders and schools, I have been excited by their focus and energy. They have engaged state and local leaders to develop a strategic plan, the first stage of which was the development of an entrepreneurship curriculum for youth at the middle-school age level. It focuses on combining strong content with youth-oriented, fun activities. The components of the curriculum add great value to instructional techniques not only for Nebraska educators and 4-H leaders, but also for their counterparts nationwide. ESI also serves as a wonderful way for youth to explore their communities and gain an appreciation for their rich history and to learn more about local and area entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship can be defined as "making a product, service, or idea better." That certainly holds true for the Nebraska 4-H ESI curriculum. ESI and the planned elementary and high school level companion curricula are unique efforts and ones which promise to pay dividends for communities and schools that utilize them.

Sincerely

Gregg Christensen

Gregg Christensen
Entrepreneurship and Career Education Specialist

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**HOMETOWN COMPETITIVENESS**

A Come-Back Give-Back Approach to Rural Community Building

Dear Entrepreneurship Investigator:

Get your explorer hats on and investigative tools out! It's time to jump into one of the most exciting exploration adventures you've ever been a part of. On behalf of the entire ESI Team, we are glad to have you on the case! This exciting, investigative journey can change how you think about yourself, your community and your future.

In Unit 1, you will take the first steps on your journey by discovering the E-Scene. As you go through the activities, dig deep, ask questions and think about what you are learning about your community, entrepreneurship and yourself, and why it is important. Think about how entrepreneurship can be a pathway to fulfilling your dreams. Consider how you can benefit your community and perhaps help create a brighter future for your family and friends through your entrepreneurial endeavors.

Is your dream to sell unique products you make on your family farm or ranch, to own your own retail store or to manufacture an invention? Whatever your dream, there are people who want to help you make it a reality. It may be your parents or grandparents, a successful business owner who believes in you and your idea, your community's economic development director, a teacher, your 4-H club leader or a friend who wants to partner with you in your new venture. ESI will help you discover these people so they can help you.

Although many people can help, you need to take the first step. You need to create a plan for action. ESI will help you do this. Take advantage of this opportunity to start the process of living out your dream. Will it be fun? Yes! Will some of it be hard work? Absolutely. Will you make mistakes along the way? You bet! Every successful entrepreneur has failed more than a few times, but rather than giving up, they learned from their mistakes and tried again.

Is there a dream inside you just waiting to be made real? Something so powerful you can't stop thinking about it? If so, let's begin to make your dream real. If you have not yet found it, ESI will help you uncover what can become your passion through investigation and discovery.

I truly believe that if you are willing to work at it, ESI can help change your life and your community's future. You have gifts and talents that the world and your community need. With ESI and the help of people who care about you, you can make your dream happen.

Let the journey begin!

Craig Schroeder
Senior Associate, RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship



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Welcome!

You are about to enter the exciting world of ESI (EntrepreneurShip Investigation)! Enjoy investigating the endless possibilities of your future as an entrepreneur. What is your passion? Where would you live? What would you do? Where do you start? Follow the clues.

You are currently looking at the first of a series of manuals. **Unit 1, ESI: Discover the E-Scene,** is designed to help you learn what it means to be an entrepreneur. If you find this experience interesting and would like to learn more, I would encourage you to check the following additional units.

**Unit 2, ESI: The Case of Me** is designed to develop basic skills needed to succeed in the professional and business world. These skills are necessary for you to succeed in any professional career. They are, however, especially important for entrepreneurs.

**Unit 3, ESI: Your Business Inspection.** Your final project will be a completed business plan. This manual is divided into three parts: 1) Concept Development. What are the possibilities? 2) Resourcing. You will find the resources, build your team and develop a business plan. 3) Start-Up. Investigate customer service, marketing and business development. Take advantage of all three units and make your dream a reality.

Our CD-ROM and Web site are tools that you can use to enhance your learning experiences.

CD-ROM. The electronic Investigator's Notebook will allow you to automatically link your activities to build a business plan. You can also learn about e-commerce and other related activities by using the resources available on the CD-ROM.

Web site, *http://4h.unl.edu/esi*. Look at "No Place Like Home," a cost-of-living index. See what jobs pay in various geographic areas, compared with the same jobs in your hometown. Listen to young entrepreneurs through podcasts, link to related Web sites, and take advantage of cool games related to entrepreneurship.

Have fun. **Discover the E-Scene.**

Sincerely,

Patricia J. Fairchild, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
4-H Curriculum Design and
Youth Entrepreneur Specialist

**Know how. Know now.**

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