



December 13, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support in developing a Co-Working Space as part of the Northeast Nebraska *Growing Together* Initiative.

The *Growing Together* Initiative focuses on the transformation of Northeast Nebraska's regional economy. Critical to its success is population growth, particularly between the ages of 20 – 34. Like many communities in the Midwest, decline in the number of ag related jobs, growth of automation and a reduction in the number of low-wage, low skilled jobs, along with the out-migration of young people has taken its toll on rural economies. Northeast Nebraska aims to change that.

The Aksarben Foundation, a 124-year-old statewide leadership network, joined forces with a committed group of regional leaders, led by Mike Flood, businessman and former Speaker of the Nebraska State Legislature to explore ways to achieve regional transformation. Key to this effort is a focus on 20–34-year olds, and what they value when it comes to their careers and where they live.

*Growing Together* uses placemaking and density, focused on a 3 X 7 block area of downtown Norfolk, the economic hub of the region, to create an environment where young people between the ages of 20-34 will want to work and live. Businesses will re-locate 1,000 young employees to the downtown area, housing will be developed. By partnering with Wayne State College to create a pipeline of tech, business and communications professionals, and Invest Nebraska, a private venture development organization, to attract business capital for tech start-ups, an inventory of tech workers in Northeast Nebraska and a concentration of tech workers in downtown Norfolk will be developed.

An anchor of this project, and absolutely critical to its success, is the development of an incubation and co-working space – a place where tech founders and entrepreneurs can work together and entrepreneurial events such as '1 Million Cups' can take place. Other communities across the country have seen tremendous success through the integration of entrepreneurs and a highly skilled workforce living and working in a dense area as they build their own products and teams. This is what young people are attracted to - this is the future of rural America - and this can be the future for Greater Nebraska.

Thank you for your consideration of this Google grant. Including the Google Foundation in this partnership will have an enormous impact on the future economy of Northeast Nebraska.

Best,

Sandra Reding  
President, Aksarben Foundation