

December 12, 2019

Google.org Impact Challenge

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter in strong support of the Founders in Residence project under the Northeast Nebraska – Growing Together Initiative. If the Google.org Impact Challenge grant is awarded to this project, it would be used for the design and development of an incubation and co-working tech space in downtown Norfolk.

Invest Nebraska is a statewide, venture development organization focused on supporting early stage, high growth entrepreneurs in the state. As a public-private partnership with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, supporting rural entrepreneurs is critical in our organization's mission. Since inception, Invest Nebraska has invested over \$20 million dollars in 62 high growth start-up companies, mostly in the Lincoln and Omaha areas. This funding was matched by over \$105 million in private capital. Even more exciting is that these companies have gone on to raise an additional \$62 million in follow-on capital.

We continue to monitor the entrepreneurial activity in rural areas. However, for a successful tech ecosystem to develop it requires a density of tech workers, creatives, and startups. While difficult in any community, it is especially challenging in rural areas.

Using data from Emsi (a labor analytics service), we have identified over 200 computer/tech workers in the Norfolk region. These occupations range from Computer User Support Specialists to Software Developers. These workers may work for companies or they may be working from home. Building from this foundation, and combined with creatives working remotely in the region, this will provide the core density for the co-working space.

Invest Nebraska is encouraged by the collaborative approach taken by our Norfolk partners to build a technology based economic development strategy. A Google.org Impact Challenge award would reinforce the vision that a technology ecosystem can grow in a rural region.

Sincerely,



Daniel Hoffman  
CEO