

2024 Community of Excellence Application McCook, Nebraska Communities of Excellence 2026



McCook, Nebraska
2024 Journey to Community Excellence Application

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

CEG- Community Excellence Group

CHA – Community Health Assessment

CHNA – Community Health Needs Assessment

COE – Communities of Excellence

MCC- McCook Community College

MCFF – McCook Community Foundation Fund

MPS- McCook Public Schools

MEDC – McCook Economic Development Corporation

NE – Nebraska

PDCA – Plan-Do-Check-Act

SDOH – Social Determinants of Health

SIPOC – Suppliers, Inputs, Processes, Outputs, Customers

UNL – University of Nebraska Lincoln

VOC – Voice of the Customer

VOR – Voice of the Resident

Community Profile

P.1 Community Description: What are your community’s key characteristics?

P.1a. Community Environment

P.1a (1) Community Definition and IDENTITY What geographic area defines your community?

We define our community as the City of McCook, including a two-mile extension beyond the city limit for utility support and future growth. We focus our data and metrics within these city limits. A map of the city's zoning is included in our supporting documents. While we primarily consider the city limits, we also emphasize the importance of nearby lakes and agriculture, which are integral to our community and located within thirty miles of McCook.

McCook is located at the intersections of Highway 83 going from North to South, a highway that goes from the Canadian border to the Mexico border and Highway 6 and 34, which is a well-traveled road that connects easily between Eastern Nebraska cities of Lincoln and Omaha, to Colorado including Denver and the Estes Park area.



Figure P.1a (1) – 1 shows the City of McCook on a state map.

What are your community’s population and growth data compared with that of other communities locally, regionally, or nationally?
 McCook itself has a population of approximately 7,400 people. McCook has experienced a slight decline of population like most rural communities. The State of Nebraska population is growing slightly, mostly in the eastern urban areas. The closest towns of larger size are to the north by seventy-five miles, North Platte, population 22,722 and to the northeast by 105 miles, Kearney, population 34,277.

What is your COMMUNITY IDENTITY?

McCook offers a regional trade center that is an

excellent opportunity for families. It is the perfect place to put down roots, raise a family, and retire. Outdoor recreation is woven into the fabric of western Nebraska rural communities like McCook. Nature is never more than a few minutes away. Numerous State Recreation Areas, Reservoirs, and Wildlife Management Areas throughout the area are great places for birding, camping, hunting and fishing. McCook is the home to the award-winning Heritage Hills Golf course, Nebraska’s only James Beard recognized restaurant, and the only Frank Lloyd Wright designed home in the state. Whether you come to McCook for shopping, an overnight stay or a several-day excursion for the whole family, we promise that it will be a memorable experience! Enjoy the natural settings and outdoor adventures along the river, prairie lakes and walking trails. Celebrate with us during our award-winning festivals, special events, and annual celebrations. Stroll along our brick streets at your leisure while visiting our specialty shops and restaurants.

United States Census Bureau (QuickFacts McCook)	
PEOPLE	
Population, Census April 1, 2020	7,430
Population estimates, July 1, 2023 (V2023)	7,253
Population percent change - April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2023	-2.4%
Age and Sex	
Persons under 5 years, percent	4.9%
Persons under 18 years, percent	19.9%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	21.8%
Female persons, percent	52.5%
Race and Hispanic Origin	
White alone, percent	91.7%
Black or African American alone, percent	1.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	1.0%
Asian alone, percent	0.0%
Two or More Races, percent	4.2%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	4.5%
Other, percent	0.5%
Income & Poverty	
Median household income (in 2022 dollars)	\$53,750
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2022 dollars)	\$34,758
Persons in poverty, percent	13.9%

Figure P.1a(1)-2 Quick facts McCook

P.1a (2) Community Offerings What are your community’s KEY OFFERINGS to its resident and other STAKEHOLDER groups (see P.1a[3]) in the areas of health, education, the economy, housing, and other aspects of quality of life? What is the relative importance of these OFFERINGS?

Table P.1a (2) Key Offerings & Organizations

Pillar:	Key Offerings:	Key Organizations:
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Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Healthcare Services - Fitness Centers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Hospital - McCook Clinic - Quality Urgent Care - Assisted Living Facilities/ Nursing Home - Public Health Departments - Area Fitness Centers
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational Facilities and Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mid-Plains Community College- McCook - McCook Public Schools - St. Patrick Elementary School - University of Nebraska Extension - Preschool and Daycare - Southwest Area Training Services
Family (Quality of Life)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Childcare Centers - Youth Programs - Cultural and Community Celebrations - Outdoor Recreational Amenities - Centers of Worship - Transportation Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - McCook YMCA - McCook City Library - City of McCook Parks & Recreation - Nebraska Game and Parks - Ministerial Assoc. - Ben Nelson Regional Airport - Amtrak Railroad
Economic Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing - Business Development/Assistance - Childcare Funding - Tourism - Workforce Development/Assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - McCook Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) - McCook Chamber of Commerce - Red Willow County Visitor’s Bureau - Local businesses - Downtown McCook - Creative Arts District

McCook offers a rich blend of historical, political, and cultural assets. The town is the hometown of influential figures like George Norris and Ben Nelson, fostering community pride. Its history in agriculture and railroad development enriches its cultural heritage. McCook also promotes the arts through its Creative Arts District and enhances its appeal with the Beautify McCook

initiative. These offerings contribute significantly to the health, education, economy, housing, and overall quality of life for residents and stakeholders.

Each of these offerings plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for residents and stakeholders in McCook, with economic opportunities, historical significance, transportation access, natural resources, political heritage, and technological advancements collectively contributing to the community's vitality and prosperity.

What major facilities, infrastructure, and resources (e.g., technology, housing, transportation, and natural resources) support your community’s KEY OFFERINGS?

- **Natural Resources:** The land area surrounding McCook offers access to water bodies and land suitable for fishing, hunting, and outdoor recreational activities. Three lakes within 30 minutes of McCook provide irrigation for farming and opportunities for fishing and recreation. We also sit on top of the Ogallala Aquifer, which is the largest in the world.
- **Transportation Infrastructure:** McCook Ben Nelson Regional Airport offers commercial flights to and from Denver, enhancing connectivity and accessibility for residents and businesses. Additionally, the presence of Burlington Northern Railroad and an Amtrak stop facilitates transportation of goods and passengers. McCook is at the intersection of three major highways.
- **Technological Advancements:** McCook offers advanced telecommunication infrastructure, including high-speed internet access through wireless and wired networks. Access to major fiber optic lines and rural broadband initiatives ensures connectivity both within the city and in rural areas, supporting education, business, and quality of life.
- **Economic Opportunities:** McCook serves as a center of commerce and trade in Southwest Nebraska and Northwest Kansas. The presence of manufacturing facilities like Valmont Industries and Parker provides employment opportunities and contributes to the local economy.

What recent changes has the community experienced in its needs for these assets?

Recent changes in McCook's community needs include the closure of a local pool, increasing the demand for recreational facilities. The population dynamics show a rise in young families and an aging infrastructure, particularly concerning McCook Junior High and ballfields, requiring updates and maintenance. There is a notable loss of green space

impacting sports and outdoor activities, coupled with a need to keep pace with other communities in technology, address housing shortages, and meet rising childcare demands. Retail and commercial purchasing options have become more crucial to support the shopping needs of residents.

P.1a (3) Residents and Other STAKEHOLDERS What are your community’s KEY resident groups and other STAKEHOLDER groups?

The key resident groups:

- Working Age (19-65)
- Seniors/ Retired (65+)
- Students/ Youth (19 and under)

Customer groups:

- Consumers travel into McCook on various occasions for entertainment and shopping needs or for tourism and special events.

Stakeholder groups:

- County Government
- City Government
- Community Hospital
- MEDC
- UNL Extension
- McCook Chamber of Commerce
- McCook Public and Private Schools
- McCook Community College
- Public Health Departments
- Red Willow County Ministerial Association (representing Churches)
- McCook Community Foundation Fund
- Service Organizations
- Red Willow County Visitor’s Bureau
- Local Agriculture Industry
- Local Media
- Local Financial Institutions

What are the KEY SEGMENTS of these groups, as appropriate?

Our key resident groups are segmented above. To see McCook’s population demographics refer to Figure P.1a (1)-2.

What are their KEY requirements and expectations of your community?

Table P.1a (3) Key Requirements

Residents and other Stakeholder groups	Key Requirements & Expectations
Working Age (19-65)	Job opportunities, housing, recreation and entertainment, childcare, safe community
Seniors/ Retired (65+)	Access to transportation, accessible healthcare, social networks, senior housing
Students/ Youth (19 and under)	Access to transportation, quality education, recreation, and entertainment
Customer Groups (Consumers)	Retail and dining options, recreation and entertainment, accessible health services (healthcare, dental, eye care), professional services
Stakeholders	Thriving and diverse economy, sustainable leadership, adequate workforce, engaged community members, safe community

What are the differences in requirements and expectations among the KEY resident and other STAKEHOLDER groups and SEGMENTS?

The differences in requirements and expectations among McCook's key resident and stakeholder groups are influenced by age and individual preferences. Working Age and Students/ Youth prioritize education and safety, seek opportunities for growth and social engagement, working-age adults focus on employment and housing, retirees look for health and leisure options. All groups need a supportive economic environment, educational institutions require community support, and consumers depend on resources and infrastructure. Understanding these variances helps create tailored programs and services that enhance the quality of life for all community members.

P.1a (4) People Resources What KEY individuals, organizations, groups, and SEGMENTS are involved in delivering your community's KEY OFFERINGS?

Table P.1a (4) Community Groups and Segments

Community Groups & Segments	Numbers	Definition
Residents	7,400	Residents live in McCook full time.
Community Groups	Approximately 50	Non- profit/ volunteer groups with a specific focus within the community.
Business & Commerce	More than 500	Most of the 500 businesses in McCook are owned/ operated by residents of McCook and surrounding towns.
Consumers	32,000	Consumers from McCook and surrounding areas come for use of retail, community groups, events, and various other resources.

What changes has the community experienced in its needs for these individual positions, organizations, groups, and SEGMENTS?

The community has experienced significant changes in its needs for various positions, organizations, groups, and segments. There is now a greater demand for volunteers and workers due to a shift from seeking more jobs to seeking more workers. This is primarily driven by an aging workforce and retirements, leading to a shortage of skilled workers to fill vacant positions. Additionally, the community needs more space to build and develop, as well as expanded shopping opportunities to meet the demands of residents.

P.1a (5) Regulatory Environment What are the KEY regulations that impact the provision of your community KEY OFFERINGS or your community excellence group's programs and services?

Table P.1a (5) Regulations

Pillar:	Key Regulation Examples:
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Center for Disease Control (CDC) - Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) - Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) - Nebraska Game and Parks
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nebraska Department of Education
Economic Vitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tax Increment Financing (TIF) - LB- 840 (Sales Tax) - Housing Grant Guidelines - State and Federal Programs
Family/ Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nebraska Childcare Licensing Standards - IRS 501(c)(3) Compliance

These regulations ensure that our programs and services are delivered in a safe, legal, and effective manner, aligning with federal, state, and local standards. Compliance with these regulations is essential for the sustainability and success of our community offerings.

P.1b Community Excellence Group

P.1b (1) MISSION, VISION, VALUES, AND CULTURE What are your community excellence group's stated MISSION, VISION, and VALUES?

Mission: Enhancing the quality of life for our residents by collaborating to focus on education, family, economic vitality and health.

Vision: Moving toward excellence by evaluating and improving the quality of life in our community: McCook on the **MOVE**.

Values: **M**omentum, **O**pportunities, **V**isionary, **E**xcellence

What are the defining characteristics of the group's CULTURE? What are the group's CORE COMPETENCIES, and what is their relationship to its MISSION and VISION?

Our culture is built on a shared commitment to improving our community. Despite different perspectives, we are united by the common goal of making McCook better. We believe the success of our community requires a collaborative effort.

Our core competencies include gathering unique perspectives and leveraging the expertise of our members. We have knowledgeable individuals who can either do the work or connect with those who can. This aligns with our mission as each pillar—Education, Health, Economic Vitality, and Family—has strategic goals that contribute to the overall mission. These pillars guide our efforts and ensure we are collectively moving towards our vision of community excellence.

P.1b (2) Composition What KEY individuals, organizations, and groups [see P.1a(4)] are involved in your community excellence group?

Our CEG began in August 2018 with a core group of seven members representing the hospital, MEDC, McCook Chamber of Commerce, and UNL Extension. Over time, our group has expanded to include a diverse range of stakeholders including local schools, health departments, McCook Community Foundation Fund, and the YMCA. We have also, this past year, engaged the City of McCook with our Core group.

The core group functions as a steering committee for our COE initiative. These organizations that supply core team members have institutionalized their participation, ensuring continuity despite personnel changes. For instance, when a director from the Chamber of Commerce changed positions, the new hire was quickly onboarded and integrated into our efforts.

Additionally, we have an advisory board, which includes representatives from all four pillars—Education, Health, Economic Vitality, and Family. The advisory board provides in-depth input and feedback, ensuring our initiatives are well-rounded and comprehensive. By involving these key individuals, organizations, and groups, our CEG leverages a wide array of expertise and perspectives, all committed to enhancing the quality of life in McCook.

What are the KEY drivers that engage them in achieving your group's MISSION and VISION?

The key drivers that engage the group in achieving our mission and vision are deeply rooted in our shared aspirations for McCook's prosperity and vitality. Firstly, our community relies on a workforce to fill essential roles within various organizations. By attracting individuals to McCook, we ensure that these positions are filled, enabling businesses and services to thrive. Secondly, many of us have family ties to McCook and a vested interest in its improvement. We desire to create an environment that fosters growth and opportunity for our families, both now and in the future. Additionally, to maintain McCook's appeal and competitiveness, it is crucial that we adapt and evolve with the times, offering amenities and opportunities that attract residents and businesses alike. Our collective goal is to enhance McCook's quality of life, making it a place where people not only want to live but also to work and raise their families.

Who serves as the BACKBONE ORGANIZATION, if your group includes one?

Community Hospital serves as the backbone organization and leads three of our four pillars. However, there is an opportunity for growth by involving more community leaders in the driver's seat of some pillars. This would enhance collaboration, diversity of perspectives, and shared ownership of our community's initiatives, leading to more comprehensive and effective outcomes.

P.1b (3) LEADERSHIP SYSTEM What LEADERSHIP SYSTEM does your community excellence group use to lead its community excellence efforts?

Leadership System

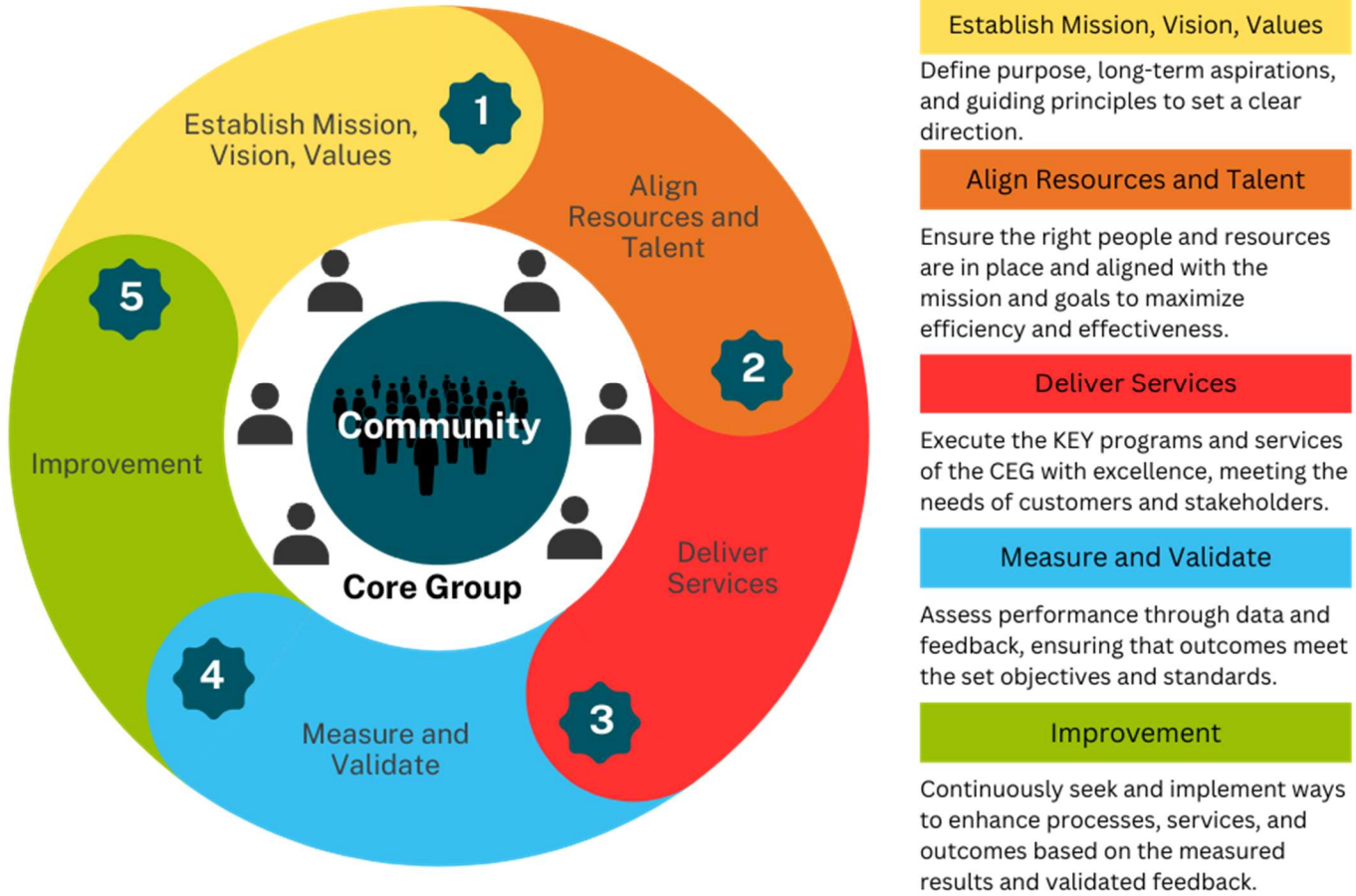


Figure P.1b (3) Leadership System

Our CEG employs the outlined Leadership System. Our Core Group gathers input from residents via surveys, the advisory group, and feedback channels. This feedback informs us of our first step of establishing our Mission, Vision, and Values (MVV), which we then carry through steps 2-5. In the fifth step, "Improvement," we utilize the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) performance improvement model to evaluate our actions, review metrics, and implement changes for continuous enhancement.

P.1b (4) Programs and Services What programs and services are offered through the efforts of your community excellence group? What KEY resident and other STAKEHOLDER groups do they serve?

Programs and Services	Key Resident Groups/ Stakeholder Groups	Key Partners	Key Collaborators
Convening and Coordinating	- Working age - Seniors/Retired - Students	- Core Group	- Pillar Work Groups
Community Scorecard Development	- Working age - Seniors/retired	- Core Group	- Pillar Work Groups
Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis	- Working age - Seniors/retired - Students/Youth	- Core Group	- Advisory Group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer Groups - Stakeholders 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pillar Work Groups - Consultants
Clearinghouse for Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer Groups - Stakeholders - Working age - Seniors/retired 	- Core Group	- Pillar Work Groups
Leadership Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working age - Seniors/retired - Students/Youth - Stakeholders 	- Core Group	- Pillar Work Groups

Our community excellence group focuses on uniting diverse leaders to work collaboratively towards shared objectives. We facilitate a range of programs and services designed to foster this cooperation, including:

1. **Convening and Coordinating:** We bring together community organizations and leaders to align efforts and strategies.
2. **Community Scorecard Development:** We create and maintain a community scorecard to track progress and outcomes.
3. **Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis:** We conduct thorough assessments to identify community needs and service gaps.
4. **Clearinghouse for Services:** We function as a central hub for information on existing community services, ensuring resources are efficiently utilized.
5. **Leadership Training:** We offer training programs for community leaders, such as the Southwest Nebraska Leadership Institute.

These initiatives primarily serve key resident groups and other stakeholders, including local community leaders, non-profit organizations, service providers, and residents in need of these services.

P.1b (5) PARTNERS and COLLABORATORS What KEY PARTNERS and COLLABORATORS support your community excellence group? What role do they play in producing and delivering its programs and services?

Our CEG collaborates with various key partners and collaborators who play crucial roles in producing and delivering its programs and services. These partners and collaborators change based on the specific initiatives being focused on at any given time. The core group's involvement in coordinating, developing the community scorecard, gathering needs assessments, serving as a clearinghouse for services, and providing leadership training ensures that each initiative is well-supported and effectively executed. This collaborative approach integrates key partners and collaborators dynamically, tailored to the specific requirements of each project.

Partner organization project examples include, but are not limited to:

- **Disc Golf Course:** Initiated by a group of enthusiastic players, planned with the Family Pillar, proposed to and approved by the city council, implemented with community support.
- **Pickleball Courts:** Similar process with a different focus group, demonstrating the flexible and initiative-specific involvement of community members and partners.

P.1b (6) PERFORMANCE Improvement SYSTEM What is the overall SYSTEM for PERFORMANCE improvement used by your community excellence group? What KEY tools and methods are used as part of this system?

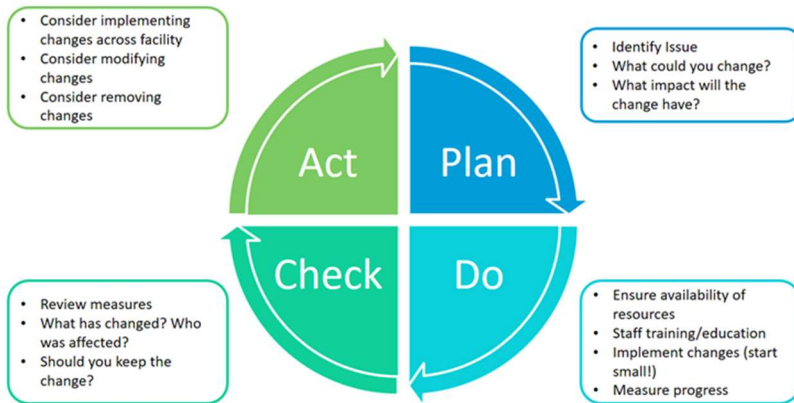


Figure P.1b (6) PDCA Cycle

Our Community Excellence Group uses the **Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle** for performance improvement across four pillars: Family, Education, Economic Vitality, and Health.

PDCA Process

1. **Plan:**
 - Conducted community surveys, gap analysis, and Voice of the Resident mapping for Family, Education, and Economic Vitality.
 - Initially we used the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) for Health but later conducted our own survey for comprehensive understanding.
2. **Do:**
 - Implemented initiatives based on survey insights.
 - Collaborated with local organizations for effective execution.
3. **Check:**
 - Monitored progress through metrics and resident feedback.
 - Included Health pillar assessments to ensure effectiveness.
4. **Act:**
 - Refined initiatives based on evaluation data.
 - Improved Health initiatives based on new insights.

Key Tools and Methods

- Surveys and Gap Analysis
- Voice of the Resident Mapping
- CHNA
- Collaborative Networks
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Feedback Mechanisms

The PDCA cycle ensures continuous improvement and alignment with community needs across all pillars.

P.2 Community Situation:

What is your community's strategic situation?

P.2a Competitive Environment

P.2a (1) Competitive Position

With regard to its KEY OFFERINGS [See P.1a(2)], what is your community's competitive position relative to similar or nearby communities? What other communities provide similar OFFERINGS? What differentiates your community's KEY OFFERINGS from theirs?

The city of McCook holds a significant economic importance for the agricultural base in the region. It serves as a vital

hub for smaller neighboring communities, providing essential services and amenities. The nearby communities tend to be much smaller and lack the comprehensive range of offerings available in McCook, including retail outlets, grocery stores, hardware stores, movie theaters, farm and country stores, implement and car dealerships, automotive repair and supply shops, and healthcare services. McCook's competitive advantage lies in its ability to provide a diverse array of services and amenities that cater to the needs of both residents and visitors, setting it apart from neighboring communities.

P.2a (2) Community Changes

What KEY changes, if any, are affecting your community's competitive situation, including changes that create opportunities for collaboration and INNOVATION for your community excellence group, as appropriate?

Significant changes are influencing the competitive landscape of our community, particularly the growth and expansion of our neighboring town to the north, North Platte. As North Platte continues to develop its housing options, shopping outlets, and recreational facilities, it becomes a more attractive destination for shopping and leisure activities. This trend may draw more people from our community to North Platte for their needs and entertainment.

McCook is proactively enhancing its own amenities and infrastructure. Initiatives such as the development of a new YMCA, construction of a new pool, and decisions on updating or expanding our ball fields demonstrate our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of our residents. These projects provide opportunities for collaboration and innovation within our community excellence group by rallying together for the common good, we can effectively push forward these initiatives and ensure that Southwest Nebraska continues to thrive with improved recreational and wellness facilities.

P.2a (3) Comparative Data

What KEY sources of comparative and competitive data about your community and community excellence group are available? What limitations, if any, affect your ability to obtain or use these sources to guide your work and make decisions?

Key sources of comparative data for our community include the Nebraska Department of Education, US Census Bureau, and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. These provide valuable insights into educational outcomes, demographic trends, and health statistics. However, the main limitation is that the data is often outdated and not updated as frequently as needed, affecting the relevance and accuracy of our decision-making. Additionally, data specificity and resource constraints can limit our ability to fully utilize this information. Despite these challenges, these sources are crucial for our strategic planning and comparative analysis.

P. 2b Strategic Context

P.2b (1) CHALLENGES, THREATS, ADVANTAGES, and OPPORTUNITIES

What are your community's KEY STRATEGIC CHALLENGES, THREATS, ADVANTAGES, and OPPORTUNITIES? HOW do they relate to your community excellence group's MISSION and VISION?

Our key strategic challenges and advantages are listed below and included on each pillar flow in the supporting documents. They relate to our mission and vision by being focused on our residents and increasing the quality of life in our community.

P.2b (1) Challenges, Threats, Advantages, and Opportunities

Challenges/ Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shifting demographics: Decreasing working age population and an increasingly aging population - Attracting, recruiting, and retaining necessary qualified workforce to a small rural community - Highly dependent on an Agriculturally based Economy - Access to affordable and available housing options - Available childcare programs
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<p>Advantages/ Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Leadership from all generations – Southwest Nebraska Leadership, McCook Optimists, etc.- Wide array of offerings for residents- Hub for trade and multiple job opportunities- Environment for Value added agriculture entrants- Natural Resources – close lakes for fishing/camping and opportunities for hunting- McCook Community College student base- Geography being a regional hub used more being 70 to 100 miles from larger cities
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