



Lincoln, NE

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NE CARES COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION

This report serves to document and summarize the main themes discussed at the NE CARES Community Listening Session, held virtually on December 4th, 2023.

Participants included representatives from the following areas:

- Education
- Tribal Nations
- State Government
- Neighborhood Organizations and Agencies
- Cultural Centers
- Healthcare

SUMMARY

Participants reported that Lincoln is generally a great place to live with a lot of people and organizations working towards the public good. There is also lots of access to state and local elected officials. Non-profits in particular are working to help new Nebraskans and minoritized populations access resources and education. Barriers still exist, especially for minoritized populations and participants reported a need for communities to come together to fix the problems.

Participants voiced ways UNL could partner with Lincoln by helping students and faculty create long-term partnerships and mentorship opportunities. Participants reported that they want UNL to be a reciprocal partner and be intentional in their relationships.

THEME 1: RESOURCES AND ACCESS

Participants reported many bright spots and resources in Lincoln, and many are working hard to ensure everyone can access them. These resources include the Malone Center, cultural centers, Food Pantry trucks, and the New Americans Task Force, which provides skills for civic engagement to immigrants and refugees. Lincoln is also a creative arts district, and the community comes together to support businesses.

Although participants reported an abundance of resources, they also were aware that not everyone had access to these resources, it was sometimes difficult to know where to get resources, and there were systematic ways that Lincoln could improve. For immigrant and refugee communities especially,

navigating these systems without adequate linguistic and cultural translation can be difficult. There are many dialects, and some are not confident in their heritage language. This language barrier was identified particularly around mental healthcare with the stigmas attached to it and the ways that the Western model does not translate across cultures in terms of the language or description of symptoms. Participants reported that access to pre and postnatal care, and early childhood education is not equitable across the city. Parents need more education to help their children and their families thrive. Participants reported that cultural competency education is needed for healthcare workers to reduce barriers for non-white patients. Participants also reported an uptick of Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) cases, with more severe physical and sexual abuse cases, without more volunteers to help with the uptick.

THEME 2: NON-MAJORITY POPULATION FACING DISCRIMINATION

Participants reported that non-white Lincolnites experience discrimination and barriers. Some examples brought up include:

- Employment discrimination
- Bullying and microaggressions in schools
- Verbal assaults in public
- Lack of affordable housing
- Communication barriers leading to lack of available services
- Healthcare discrimination

More broadly, for immigrants and refugees, different expectations around parenting, family, healthcare system and schooling can cause problems. The pressure on children, whether from translating for parents, or from school, has created mental health needs that youth are trying to self-medicate through nicotine and other substance use. Lack of knowledge around child protective services creates fear among immigrant families that may prevent them from accessing health services. Some parents take their children to the ER for all healthcare needs because they do not understand the healthcare system.

Other aspects of cultural and linguistic diversity included the need to develop and sustain cultural knowledge of Indigenous people.

THEME 3 UNL AS A PARTNER

Participants identified that students from UNL serve as volunteers or contribute to short term programs, but that there is a need for longer-term relationship building and mentoring. Many had worked with Nebraska Extension and were pleased with its bilingual offerings. Others identified service-learning and experiential learning projects with UNL students and faculty to help their organization with marketing, communication, service delivery, and data analysis. Most experiences are positive, although there is a need for expanded support and longer-term engagement. Participants also suggested that UNL create a way for college credits from other counties to count toward degrees and qualifications at UNL, so new Nebraskans can have more opportunities. Participants reported that Latinos are the largest growing minority that is attending higher education, and also have the highest rate of college drop-outs. UNL

needs to invest in retaining these students so they stay in college. Participants also wanted UNL to focus on research communication that can change the public's mindsets.

NEXT STEPS

- Several volunteers were identified to serve on the NE CARES Steering Committee
- The NE CARES team and NE Extension will continue to act as connectors for ideas from the communities to UNL. Please reach out as you continue to have ideas!
- Special thanks to Virginia Chaidez, Emily Gratopp, and Cynthia Zluticky for taking notes during our session.

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