

# Seward County Prioritization Workshop Community Summary

Hosted by Nebraska Extension | November 7, 2025

Thank you to the community members who participated in the Seward County Prioritization Workshop. Participants represented a wide range of organizations, sectors, and communities across Seward County, including education, local government, Extension, nonprofit organizations, economic development, healthcare, youth-serving organizations, and civic leadership. The purpose of the workshop was to identify what matters most for Seward County and to surface shared priorities that can guide collaboration, planning, and future investment.

## About the Process

The workshop used a participatory, consensus-building approach designed to ensure that every voice was heard. Participants engaged in guided conversation, individual reflection, small-group discussion, and a visual consensus process to identify common themes and shared priorities. **This was not a vote or ranking exercise, but an effort to find common ground across diverse perspectives.**

## How to Read the Results



The priority areas reflect themes named by participants during the workshop. The following page provide short summaries that describe the shared intent behind the ideas, with representative examples that illustrate the range of input but are not exhaustive.

*A complete set of verbatim ideas captured on the sticky wall during the activity is included at the end of this report.*

**Community Identity & Growth:** Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining Seward County's identity while supporting thoughtful growth and change. This included keeping small towns vibrant, supporting succession planning for local businesses, strengthening connections between rural and city communities, and fostering a shared sense of pride and belonging across the county.

- Keeping Seward County's identity while adapting to growth
- Supporting small towns and rural communities
- Succession planning for businesses
- Strengthening community awareness and pride
- Unifying rural and metro/city needs and access

**Volunteering & Civic Engagement:** Participants expressed strong interest in strengthening civic engagement and volunteerism across all ages. This included making volunteer opportunities more visible, developing leadership skills, and empowering residents—especially younger and middle-aged adults—to become more involved in their communities.

- Publicizing volunteer opportunities
- Volunteer leadership development
- Civic engagement across age groups
- Empowering community members to lead and serve

**Youth Engagement & Development:** Youth engagement emerged as a significant priority, with emphasis on creating meaningful opportunities beyond traditional sports. Participants highlighted hands-on learning, internships, career exposure, mental health supports, and upgraded youth facilities as ways to better support young people and encourage them to stay in or return to Seward County.

- Youth mental health supports
- Hands-on career education and internships
- Non-traditional after-school and enrichment opportunities
- Youth facilities and infrastructure upgrades
- Building youth and family resilience

**Emergency Response:** Participants identified emergency preparedness and response as important to community safety and resilience. This included concerns related to severe weather, infrastructure impacts such as wind-damaged trees, and the need for coordinated planning and communication during emergencies.

- Safety during adverse weather events
- Emergency response coordination
- Infrastructure impacts and mitigation

**Mental Health & Wellbeing:** Mental health and overall wellbeing were identified as critical to individual, family, and community resilience. Participants highlighted the need for improved access to mental health services, including after-hours care, better coordination of resources, and positioning existing assets—such as the wellness center—as hubs for wellbeing.

- Access to mental health and healthcare services
- After-hours mental health support
- Connecting community members to mental health resources
- Community-wide focus on wellbeing
- Using the wellness center as a hub for all things wellness

**Countywide Communication:** Clear, consistent, and accessible communication was emphasized as essential for effective collaboration and service delivery. Participants expressed a desire for centralized communication tools, including a comprehensive directory of services, to help residents and organizations more easily connect to available resources.

- Centralized directory of services
- Comprehensive communication hub
- Improved information sharing across organizations
- Stronger coordination and collaboration

**Housing** was identified as a foundational challenge affecting workforce recruitment, family stability, and overall community vitality. Participants noted concerns related to affordability, availability, and quality of housing, as well as the connection between housing, childcare, and economic growth.

- Affordable and available housing
- Workforce and family housing needs
- Housing affordability (both capital and ongoing costs)
- Connections between housing, childcare, and workforce retention

## What This Means

Together, these priorities reflect a community that values wellbeing, youth and families, civic participation, and strong local identity; recognizes housing, mental health, and communication as foundational; and seeks collaborative, coordinated solutions to complex challenges. They point to opportunities for alignment across organizations and sectors to strengthen Seward County's future.

## What Happens Next

- This summary is being shared with participants and community partners and is encouraged to be shared with others who were not able to attend.
- Feedback will be collected through mid-January and used to inform next steps.
- In early 2026, Nebraska Extension will assess how it can best support the community-identified priorities through alignment, partnerships, and education. Interested partners are welcome to remain engaged as this work continues.
- As actions and opportunities emerge, updates will be shared regularly via email, through the Extension Board, and in reports to the Seward County Board of Commissioners.

*Your Feedback Matters!*

Please use the QR code, or visit the link below to provide feedback and stay connected!

**<https://go.unl.edu/sewardprioritizationfeedback>**



*Contact us at:*

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