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Libraries to be transformed into 'innovation studios'

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LINCOLN — The Norfolk Public Library and several area libraries will be among 18 Nebraska facilities that have been selected to be initial participants in the new library innovation studio project.

Gov. Pete Ricketts announced the initial participants at a press conference Friday and provided details about the effort to transform rural communities through the creation of library makerspaces.

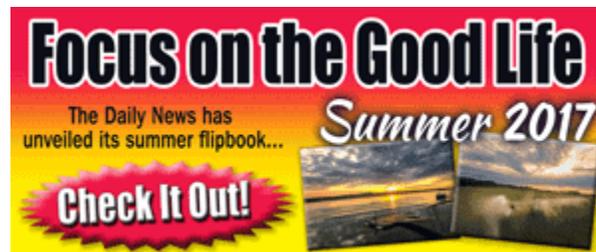


The Nebraska Library Commission was recently awarded a National Leadership Grant of \$530,732 by the Institute of Museum and Library Services for this partnership project with the University of Nebraska Lincoln, Nebraska Innovation Studio, Nebraska Extension, Regional Library Systems and local public libraries.

“This partnership demonstrates how our Nebraska communities can use technology and education to empower community residents to create, learn, and invent,” Ricketts said. “By expanding the skills of the workforce in our communities, supporting entrepreneurs, and encouraging lifelong learning, this partnership reinforces our vibrant business climate and supports community development.”

The project uses Library Innovation Studios makerspaces hosted by public libraries to support community engagement and participatory learning experiences by providing access to technology and innovative learning tools not readily accessible locally. This is expected to stimulate creativity, innovation, and the exchange of ideas to facilitate entrepreneurship, skills development, and local economic development.

The initial local library partners that will host one of the four rotating makerspaces include the Norfolk Public Library, the Ainsworth Public Library, the Neligh Public Library, the South Sioux City Public Library and the Wayne Public Library.



Twelve additional libraries will be selected in 2018 to host makerspaces in the following year.

“Nebraska’s public libraries are the natural gathering points for people to come together to share materials, knowledge, and experiences,” said Rod Wagner, Nebraska Library Commission director. “Whether the materials and tools are high tech or low tech, digital or analog, art or science, the focus is to create, invent, tinker, explore, and discover using the

tools, materials, and knowledge available. Libraries have always been dedicated to community partnership, collaboration, and the free exchange of ideas — makerspaces are the next step in that progression.”

As the state library agency, the commission is an advocate for the library and information needs of all Nebraskans. The mission of the commission is statewide promotion, development, and coordination of library and information services, bringing together people and information.

Susan Warneke of Norfolk serves as Northeast Nebraska’s representative on the commission.

