

## **Rural Economic and Community Vitality Graduate Certificate**

### **Daniela Manhani Mattos**

Chair, Rural Economic and Community Vitality Program, Assistant Professor of Practice  
Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**April 22, 2021**

*FARM Series 21-0408*

The Department of Agricultural Economics has recently created the online certificate in Rural Economic and Community Vitality. This certificate meets supplemental needs of professionals and non-professionals working in rural community development or related fields. The goal is to assist Nebraska communities, and those beyond our state borders, in becoming more entrepreneurial in their decisions and more entrepreneurially friendly in their actions as well as provide the fundamentals needed for residents and local leaders to articulate a vision for sustainable communities in a holistic perspective with practical implications. This certificate serves community leaders, practitioners and those committed to people and place.

This practical and flexible online certificate program covers a broad scope of key topics for those seeking to advance their career in the area of rural economic and community development. The certificate curriculum was designed in consultation with community development professionals to provide students with skills, knowledge, tools, and practical experience to play a proactive role in the community revitalization process of rural areas. The certificate helps to increase the capacity of community development workers in Nebraska through educating and training a new generation of professionals and life-long learners to acquire the skills necessary for constructive participation in community affairs and for designing local policy and programming in community development. Instructors are experienced faculty and Extension educators located in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Leadership and Education.

Information provided by community development experts from across Nebraska and examination of comparable programs, industry trends and survey data clearly show an increasing need for credentials that indicate community development workers are being prepared to deal with the current challenges faced by rural economies and to advocate for themselves. The online curriculum provides to those interested in rural community development a firm basis for dealing with their specific needs and the opportunity to take advantage of UNL resources and strengths as a land grant institution. The challenges affecting rural communities require community citizens and leaders who understand how to identify, address, and solve these issues by taking advantage of local resources and knowing how to tap into state and federal funding opportunities. The curriculum of this program was designed for those community economic leaders and professionals who understand these needs and the opportunities that exist for funding. Knowledgeable leaders, professionals and citizens who understand and can apply the methods and strategies of community and economic development, are vital to enhancing the quality of life in our communities.

The online Graduate Certificate in Rural Economics and Community Vitality requires 12 credits including three 3-credit courses (core courses) and three 1-credit courses (electives) for completion. In this interdisciplinary program, students have the opportunity to conclude the certificate in one year as all courses are offered throughout the year. In the core courses, students learn the foundation of community economic development and leadership. The certificate is offered completely online. Enrollment in the certificate can be done year around. To maximize flexibility, students can take classes in any order they choose. For more information about the certificate please visit <https://agecon.unl.edu/rural-economic-community-vitality-certificate>.

Cite this work:

Mattos, D. "Rural Economic and Community Vitality Certificate." *FARM Series 21-0408*, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, April 22, 2021.