

# Congress of the United States

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 15, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to request your consideration of the Nebraska consortium's application, which includes the state of Nebraska, University of Nebraska system, City of Lincoln, Nebraska Innovation Campus Development Corporation, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, Omaha Chamber of Commerce, and public and private business and agricultural stakeholders. The consortium and its plan offer a unique opportunity to support successful relocation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and/or the Economic Research Service (ERS).

Our congressional delegation applauds your commitment to make the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) an effective and efficient federal agency focused on serving its mission of sustaining future innovation and leadership in agriculture production. Your recent announcement to relocate NIFA and ERS headquarters outside of the Washington, D.C. area build on the important responsibility to partner closely with producers and America's robust agriculture businesses. Our home state of Nebraska is uniquely qualified to fulfill the requirements to accommodate these two important USDA agencies.

Production agriculture is the economic engine of America, and Nebraska leads the way. Nebraska's farm and ranch families deploy highly innovative technology to feed the world with their diverse, high-quality agriculture products. Moreover, Nebraska boasts a strong agribusiness industry that includes world class irrigation companies, equipment manufacturers, food processors, renewable fuels and biochemical companies, and many other agribusinesses. These industries would not be nearly as successful without the world-class agricultural researchers working at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) and Nebraska Innovation Campus.

Agricultural researchers in Nebraska address real world challenges with the understanding that research must be applicable to farmers, ranchers, and business owners. Their diversified projects span the entire reach of the agriculture value chain and attract experts in all disciplines. Top researchers come to Nebraska because they understand the state is rich in natural resources and our agriculture producers are committed to advancing science. With names like the Beef State and the Cornhusker State, Nebraska is well-equipped to provide NIFA and ERS employees with a closer connection to their primary customers: agriculture producers.

We understand the significance of responsibly allocating taxpayer dollars with maximum efficiency and value. In their proposal, the Nebraska consortium pledged to construct the NIFA/ ERS headquarters facilities in adherence with the federal government's specifications and cover the full operational costs for the building in a 25-year timeframe. Once the construction is complete, ownership will be transferred, or a lease will be arranged at the cost of \$1 to NIFA/ERS.

As you know, information provided by ERS and the research goals of NIFA accelerate American agriculture's future potential. Independent reports compiled by ERS examine market trends, the rural economy, farming practices, international trade developments, and food and nutrition. These, and the many other factors the agency analyzes, directly contribute to the viability of our ag economy. Producers and businesses depend on this data to make decisions that will impact their livelihoods.

NIFA's collaborative role in advancing agricultural research, education, and extension provides research institutions, and subsequently producers, with advancements in agriculture capabilities. Nebraska Innovation Campus is already launching a unique private-public research partnership to accomplish NIFA's objectives. Additionally, Nebraska consortium partners and Nebraska Innovation Campus work on the state, national, and international stages to deliver businesses and producers with up-to-date statistical information that enable them to make knowledge-based decisions.

Nebraska is the hub for agriculture innovation. The state is rich in natural resources, has a thriving agribusiness industry, and is home to world-class livestock, crop, and biofuels producers. Furthermore, it is a great state to live, work, and raise a family. We urge you to strongly consider Nebraska's application for the Nebraska Innovation Campus to serve as the headquarters for NIFA and/or ERS. These agencies and their workforce belong in a state that leads the world in agriculture productivity and advancements.

Sincerely,




---

Deb Fischer  
United States Senator




---

Ben Sasse  
United States Senator

  
Jeff Fortenberry  
Member of Congress

  
Don Bacon  
Member of Congress

  
Adrian Smith  
Member of Congress