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Chad Chancellor: Welcome to this week's episode of the Next Move Group We Are Jobs podcast. I'm Chad Chancellor, co-founder of Next Move Group and today we've got Nicole Sedlacek with us. I hope I said that right. Did I say it right?

Nicole Sedlacek: You said it perfectly, Chad.

Chad Chancellor: I've got my New Orleans accent and it's 7:30 in the morning at a conference and Nicole has got me out. We had scotch last night, so if I said it right, I'm proud of myself.

Nicole Sedlacek: You're doing good.

Chad Chancellor: Nicole is economic development consultant with Nebraska Public Power District and she's also the current chair of the MidAmerica EDC conference where we're speaking this morning. Thank you for the invitation and we're glad to have you on our show.

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. Well, thank you for the invite to your show and thank you for joining us at this year's Competitiveness Conference.

Chad Chancellor: Awesome.

Nicole Sedlacek: You sat on our site selector panel and provided some great information to our attendees and some great information in your roundtable session and you saw the presentation to go to today.

Chad Chancellor: That's right. I think I can get through it. It's already billed. So all I got to do is well half of life is showing up huh? So, why don't you tell these folks about Nebraska Public Power? Do you cover the whole state? What are you all doing, kind of what your role is?

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. Well, we help serve to more than 600,000 Nebraskans either at the retail or wholesale-- with wholesale electric power and energy-related services. We generate and then we deliver that to either 46 municipalities, 25 public power districts or cooperatives and we also serve 80 Nebraska communities at the retail level. So, we serve a big part of Nebraska. It's not the entire part, but it's all or parts of 86 of our 93 Nebraska counties. That's a big chunk.

Chad Chancellor: Yes and Nebraska has been good. We got to put a project in Nebraska. You all have been too good to me. In the College World Series, the Gary [Kurt? 00:03:19.15] is a friend of mine. You all have been good to me. We got to find a project for up there. We've had some food processors looking, just haven't been able to get them over the--

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes, you brought some projects to Wilson. We just got to get them over the--

Chad Chancellor: That's right. That's right. We got to get them over the line. So, talk about kind of what you all might do different there as far as-- so, do you actually help recruit for the power company or do you just handle rate negotiations? I find power companies across the country handle it different. Since you represent multiple ones, kind of what's your role with actually helping with the economic development project when they get one?

Nicole Sedlacek: NPPD is unique in the sense that we have a totally dedicated economic development department and so we have a team of about 10 of us divided into consultants who are kind of the boots on the ground helping with recruitment, expansion opportunities, and community strategic planning and business retention and expansion work and then we have a research team that really helps communities with the data, workforce.

We do a number of different things to help communities with economic development. So, we're really their partner in economic development. We want them to come to us and their other partners when they have means. We're also kind of searching for leads for recruitment projects and we help communities-- those RFIs those RFPs that come into the communities--

Chad Chancellor: Right. They're so dreaded.

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. Yes. So, when they come into the state or to the community directly, we can help them put together their information with the help of our research team and consultants with data, a number of different things that we do to help grow our communities. We're a lot more than just keeping the lights on in the community. We want to see our communities be growing healthy sustainable communities.

Chad Chancellor: And I tell you that whole Omaha to Lincoln area is very impressive because I've been two years in a row now because my team is Mississippi State and we've made the College World Series. I don't know if I just expected it to be-- of course, you know Warren Buffet and Berkshire Hathaway. I don't know if I expected it to be more ag. There's certainly a lot of ag, but it's very impressive, very nice place.

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes, yes.

Chad Chancellor: For people that haven't been there, it kind of a very hidden gem.

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. So, I am a born Nebraskan have lived there my entire life, so I'm very proud of the state from west to east, north to south. It's a beautiful state. If you haven't got past Lincoln and traveled more--

Chad Chancellor: Right and I hadn't till lately, yes.

Nicole Sedlacek: We need to get you there because we have some really beautiful places, some rich history and just some really great tourist attractions in the state.

Chad Chancellor: We're doing executive search right now; Cheyenne, Wyoming which kind of touches far west Nebraska. So, I've gotten to learn some of those towns in looking for candidates. So, I'm learning it on a map in Google Earth and all even if I haven't been there. So, I like to ask people how they got into this profession. Hardly anybody grew up as a kid-- you want to be a truck driver, like a nurse or farm assistant. Very few people want to be an economic developer. So, what's your story?

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. Well, I always thought I would be editor of my newspaper that I graduated from high school-- the community I graduated from high school at, but it's kind of interesting because when I look back, the community that I went to high school in got me involved in what I look back and say well, that was totally economic development at the time and so I was invited as a high school student to sit on a community to help pass a sales tax, to keep a swimming pool in the community--

Chad Chancellor: Is that right?

Nicole Sedlacek: I was invited to be a part of a community foundation organization that was working to be a place for donations to come in and grants to be awarded into the community. So, looking back-- oh, and then-- also in my high school years, I had the opportunity to attend a ribbon breaking at Nebraska's first two-turbine wind farm in north-central Nebraska.

Chad Chancellor: You were made to be an economic developer whether you knew it or not.

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. So, it's kind of interesting that I started off thinking I wanted to be kind of in the news reporting area, but then as I was covering events for a local radio station, being involved in economic development that way I was like oh, this is a really fun profession. I enjoy

getting to meet the people, working with communities on strategic planning and helping them kind of discover what kind of community they want to be and helping them discover that, helping businesses solve problems that they have whether it's a workforce problem or it's a regulation challenge or helping introduce them to the right partner that can help them. I found this true love and passion for economic development. My high school English Government teacher, Mr. Jim Hyatt and his wife, I think I can credit them to kind of introducing me to the world of economic development.

Chad Chancellor: Well, that's a better story than most people have. You got more strategy than most people. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I just became one. But I will brag on Nebraska and I will also-- I know they do really good jobs up there with community foundations and a lot of them now are recruiting like young professionals where they'll actually participate in helping them finance land for housing and all and I just--

Of all my travels across the U.S., the strongest place that I really see using community foundations to do everything from building hospitals to hotels to helping housing for young professionals, I really think Nebraska, Iowa that area does it best that I see. So, I don't know if you got-- I didn't tell you I was going to ask you this. I don't know what the history of that is and why it's so strong.

Even small towns and we had Manning, Iowa on our show and what they have done with their-- I think they call it the Betterment Foundation, it's just incredible. So, talk about if you can the history of all of that.

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. So, I agree with you 100% Nebraska is very fortunate that we have an organization called the Nebraska Community Foundation that kind of really serves as an umbrella for communities like O'Neal that I live in to be a part of their network and this network actually just celebrated 25 years of being in existence and so, when you look across Nebraska communities and communities that are affiliated with the Nebraska Community Foundation, you can see that network, the dollars that have been raised and it's so much more than the dollars raised, but you can see that it's helped. In my community alone, the Community Foundation Fund has helped bring in expanded community college presence to the community. So, helping train future workforce and helping that mum kind of take that next step to better her family situation and earn more money in her family.

Chad Chancellor: To me, that is really economic development there. You probably don't want to give all your secrets away, but if folks are out there thinking about starting a community foundation, you ought to study what Nebraska and some of those places are doing because I just think you all got it down pat based on what I've seen.

Nicole Sedlacek: Thank you. Yes, I completely agree. Like I said, the Nebraska Community Foundation, which is one of our great partners in economic development in the state of Nebraska is celebrating 25 years of this network that they've helped communities really kind of grow and invest in themselves and really kind of-- we can't wait for the federal government to help our communities. It's the people that live and work there, that raise their family there that have the vested interest and want to see what's best for that community.

Chad Chancellor: Well, now you're going to have to [slip off saying? 00:10:27.15] you've got actual work you've got to do, but real quick, tell us about this organization. It's my first time to the MidAmerica EDC event and I've been very pleased with it so far. So, are you chair of the conference or chair of the organization? I can't remember.

Nicole Sedlacek: I am chair of the conference.

Chad Chancellor: Okay, chair of the conference. So, just tell folks in our territories who may be listening a little bit about this organization in case they want to come to your next conference.

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. So, MidAmerica Economic Development Council is a regional organization, so made up of a number of states here in the Midwest and we have a couple of conferences each year. Right now, it's the Competitiveness Conference and that one has always been in Chicago in December and so we bring in site consultants. It's called the Competitiveness Conference because we bring in site consultants, we learn kind of how to put our best foot forward in trying to attract projects into our communities and then every spring-summer there is a Best Practices Conference that moves around within our geographic area, but this organization is a great networking organization to learn from your peers in surrounding states. We have a very strong presence with our MidAmerica EDC; just a great organization to learn from each other, professional development. We have a number of webinars throughout the year, some great access that you can have to data in your community. So, I encourage you if you haven't attended one of

our conferences whether it's the Competitiveness or the Best Practices, I encourage you to do so and think about becoming a member of the organization.

Chad Chancellor: Yes, yes and there is a good group of folks here. The weather is not too bad for Chicago in December. I was a little worried when I said I'm going to Chicago in December, but it's worked out just fine. So, Nicole, thank you for being with us today. We really appreciate it and I appreciate the invitation to the conference.

Nicole Sedlacek: Yes. Thank you for the opportunity, Chad.

Chad Chancellor: Thank you.

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