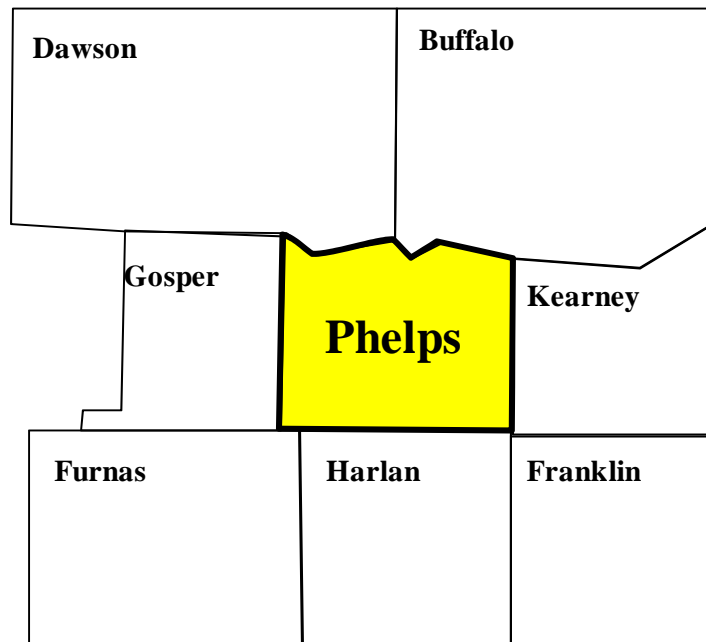


# Labor Supply Factors and Labor Availability for the Phelps County Labor Area



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# **Labor Supply Factors and Labor Availability for the Phelps County Labor Area**

## **Executive Summary**

The information provided in this report indicates that a prospective new employer providing job opportunities with competitive wages and benefits and offering career opportunities would be a welcome addition to the employment base in Phelps County and the Phelps County Labor Area. The response to such employment opportunities would be substantial, and as this report shows, there is a sizeable labor force and population base living within the Phelps County Labor Area. Some of the pertinent findings of the report include:

- Population in the Phelps County Labor Area (Phelps County plus the seven contiguous counties) totaled 98,750 people in 2007, with the Phelps County population totaling 9,175. Population in Phelps County declined by 5.9 percent during the 2000–2007 period, compared to a population increase of 0.7 percent for the eight-county Phelps County Labor Area as a whole.
- The labor force for the Phelps County Labor Area totaled 57,358 in 2007, with 55,899 local residents employed in jobs either within or outside the area. A total of 48,894 persons were employed in nonfarm wage and salary jobs located within the area. These data suggest that a number of residents of the Phelps County Labor Area were commuting out of the area for employment.
- The number of people who lived in Phelps County that were employed totaled 5,081 in 2007 and there were 4,456 persons employed in nonfarm wage and salary jobs within the county. This indicates some residents of Phelps County are commuting to work in surrounding communities.
- Average annual wages for all nonfarm wage and salary employees in the Phelps County Labor Area were \$5,740 less than the Nebraska average. Within the labor area, Phelps County had the highest average wage, \$30,284, or \$4,589 lower than the Nebraska average.

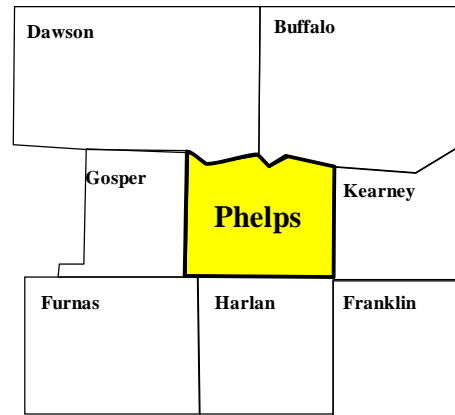
The basic conclusion of this report, which follows from the data and analysis presented, is that the Phelps County Labor Area and Phelps County would be able to provide a significant number of dedicated and skilled workers to meet the needs of additional employers in the area. While this report has not estimated a precise number of people that may be available for a prospective new employer in the Phelps County area, it is anticipated that if attractive working conditions with competitive wages and employee benefits were offered, a prospective new employer would be able to select their workforce from a substantial pool of applicants.

## Labor Supply Factors and Labor Availability for the Phelps County Labor Area

This report presents selected labor-related and demographic data that provide insights into the labor supply situation in Phelps County and the surrounding area.

In reviewing the data presented in this report, it will be evident that the Phelps County Labor Area has a sizeable pool of labor to provide for the labor requirements of additional employers in the area, both in the near term and over the long run. Data presented in this report includes tables on labor force, employment, and population for Phelps County and for the surrounding counties that make up the potential laborshed area for Phelps County. Figure One includes a map outlining the geographic area which has been defined as the Phelps County Labor Area.

Figure One  
**Phelps County Labor Area**



An important resource for new or expanding businesses is a readily available supply of workers. Whether an employer requires 5, 50, or 500 workers, they need to have confidence there will be a sufficient number of workers available to meet their labor requirements. This report is provided as a key analytical tool to identify and quantify the number and selected characteristics of workers available in the Phelps County Labor Area.

Available labor supply is defined as the number of persons who would potentially apply for employment when a job becomes available. Potential workers are categorized into two groups; those currently employed who would consider other employment opportunities and those who do not currently have a job.

One factor contributing to the available supply of workers is the willingness of workers already employed to change jobs. Factors influencing this decision are related to wages, fringe benefits, hours, and working conditions. Generally, workers are more inclined to change jobs when the wages and benefits for the potential new job are better and/or when they are optimistic about the economy.

Factors contributing to the available supply of people without jobs include the unemployment rate, labor force participation, and migration. To be classified as unemployed, an individual must have been actively looking for work in the last four weeks, unless they were expecting recall from a layoff or waiting to start a job within 30 days.

There are also potential workers that are classified as not presently in the labor force. These individuals may not be participating in the labor force as employed or unemployed workers for various reasons. They may be unable to work because of school or family

responsibilities or they may have an illness that has prevented them from becoming part of the labor force. There may also be workers who have not been able to find employment in the past and have become discouraged or who are no longer actively seeking employment because they perceive there are no attractive job opportunities available in the area. Retired persons are also classified as not in the labor force, although this population group often can provide substantial labor resources for selected business operations. Within the group of persons not currently in the labor force, and therefore not actively seeking employment, are many individuals who would accept a job with attractive working conditions, competitive wages and employee benefits if one became available.

Population migration is another factor that affects the available labor supply of potential workers who are not presently employed (and may not be seeking work within the local labor market). Persons without jobs and who perceive that there are no job opportunities available locally are the most likely to leave (migrate out) the area for employment opportunities elsewhere.

### Labor Force and Employment

Table One provides data showing labor force and employment trends for the Phelps County Labor Area and for Phelps County for selected years from 2003 to 2007. Data in Table One (Part A and Part B) provide two alternate measures of employment for two distinct areas. Data presented in Table One Part A include labor force, unemployment, employment, and nonfarm wage and salary employment data for the entire Phelps County Labor Area (see Figure One). As these data indicate, both the total labor force and total employment for the laborshed area as a whole have increased, with the area labor force growing by 2.2 percent between 2003 and 2007 and total employment growing by 2.9 percent during the same period.

**Table One**  
**Labor Force and Employment, Phelps County Labor Area<sup>(a)</sup>**  
**Part A**  
**Labor Force and Employment**  
**Phelps County Labor Area<sup>(a)</sup>, 2003–2007**

(Place of Residence)	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	% Chg. 2003-2007
<b>Labor Force<sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>56,120</b>	<b>56,284</b>	<b>55,925</b>	<b>56,365</b>	<b>57,358</b>	<b>2.2</b>
Unemployment (#)	1,794	1,873	1,834	1,432	1,459	-18.7
Unemployment Rate (%)	3.2	3.3	3.3	2.5	2.5	(N/A)
Employment	54,326	54,411	54,091	54,933	55,899	2.9
<b>(Place of Work)</b>						
<b>Nonfarm Employment<sup>(c)</sup></b>	<b>45,896</b>	<b>45,935</b>	<b>46,255</b>	<b>47,512</b>	<b>48,894</b>	<b>6.5</b>

<sup>(a)</sup> The Phelps County Labor Area includes Phelps County and the contiguous (Buffalo, Dawson, Franklin, Furnas, Gosper, Harlan, and Kearney Counties).

<sup>(b)</sup> The labor force data are measured based on the county of residence, irrespective of the county of employment.

<sup>(c)</sup> The Nonfarm Employment data are for wage and salary employment and are based on the place (county) where the individual is employed, irrespective of the county of residence.

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, [ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/laborforce\\_workforce](http://ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/laborforce_workforce).

**Table One -- Continued**  
**Part B**  
**Labor Force and Employment by Industry**  
**Phelps County, 2003–2007**

<b>(Place of Residence)</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>% Chg. 2003–2007</b>
<b>Labor Force<sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>5,414</b>	<b>5,296</b>	<b>5,247</b>	<b>5,202</b>	<b>5,203</b>	<b>-3.9</b>
Unemployment (#)	167	175	151	117	122	-26.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	3.1	3.3	2.9	2.2	2.3	(N/A)
<b>Employment</b>	<b>5,247</b>	<b>5,121</b>	<b>5,096</b>	<b>5,085</b>	<b>5,081</b>	<b>-3.2</b>
<b>(Place of Work)</b>						
<b>Nonfarm Employment<sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>4,431</b>	<b>4,311</b>	<b>4,369</b>	<b>4,384</b>	<b>4,456</b>	<b>0.6</b>
Goods Producing	1,051	961	993	1,026	1,083	3.0
Manufacturing	837 *	752 *	794 *	842 *	862 *	3.0
Mining & Construction	214	209	199	184	221	3.3
Service Providing	3,380	3,349	3,377	3,358	3,373	-0.2
Total Trade	740	763	742	708	708	-4.3
Wholesale Trade	302	326	312	307	314	4.0
Retail Trade	438	436	430	401	394	-10.0
Trans., Warehousing & Utilities	112	103	111	128	132	17.9
Information	40 *	42	42	38	37	-7.5
Financial Activities	190	187	194	196	197	3.7
Professional & Business Services	270 *	303	306 *	319 *	317	17.4
Education & Health Services	801	719	713	717	718	-10.4
Leisure and Hospitality	320	333	356	362	383	19.7
Other Services, except Public	84	89	101	103	113	34.5
Total Government	823	812	812	787	769	-6.6
Federal Government	45	42	42	43	43	-4.4
State Government	52	55	57	57	44	-15.4
Local Government	727	716	714	688	682	-6.2

<sup>(a)</sup> The labor force data are measured based on the county of residence, irrespective of the county of employment.

<sup>(b)</sup> The Nonfarm Employment data are for wage and salary employment and are based on the place (county) where the individual is employed, irrespective of the the county of residence.

\* Data suppressed by Department of Labor; estimated values from Ken Lemke, Nebraska Public Power District.

Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, [ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/laborforce\\_workforce](http://ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/laborforce_workforce)

The second employment measure presented for the Phelps County Labor Area, nonfarm wage and salary employment, increased from 45,896 in 2003 to 48,894 in 2007, an increase of 6.5 percent. In the case of the labor force data (labor force, unemployment, and employment), the respective measures are based on the county of residence. The nonfarm wage and salary employment data are measured based on the county of employment, irrespective of the place of residence of the workers.

The labor force and employment measures presented for Phelps County (Part B of Table One) indicate that the total labor force in the county declined by 3.9 percent between 2003 and 2007, with total employment (of people residing in Phelps County, irrespective of their county of employment) declining by 3.2 percent during this period.

It is also of interest to note that unemployment decreased by 26.9 percent, from 167 in 2001 to 122 in 2007, recording an unemployment rate of 2.3 percent in 2007.

As previously noted, the second employment measure presented for Phelps County, nonfarm wage and salary employment, is based on the county where the person is employed irrespective of their county of residence. Nonfarm wage and salary employment in Phelps County increased by 0.6 percent between 2003 and 2007. The data presented in Table One Part B show that the fastest growing employment sector in Phelps County during the 2003–2007 review period was the Other Services, Except Public Services sector, recording a 34.5 percent increase between 2003 and 2007. Other economic sectors experiencing significant growth in employment between 2003 and 2007 include the Leisure and Hospitality sector (19.7 percent), Transportation, Warehousing and Utilities (17.9 percent), and the Professional and Business Services sector (17.4 percent). In the case of the Total Government sector, employment in the Federal Government Sector declined by 4.4 percent while State Government employment declined by 15.4 percent and local government employment declined by 6.2 percent.

Further review of the employment data reported for the Phelps County Labor Area (Table One Part A) and for Phelps County (Table One Part B) indicates that for both areas there were differences between the nonfarm wage and salary employment reported in the areas and the total employment of persons living in the respective areas. In the case of the entire Phelps County Labor Area, nonfarm wage and salary employment was reported to be 48,894 in 2007, which was 7,005 less than the reported total employment of persons living within the eight-county Phelps County Labor Area. Recalling that nonfarm wage and salary employment is based on the county of employment while the total employment data is based on the county of residence helps explain how this can occur. It is obvious that a number of persons living within the eight-county Phelps County Labor Area work outside of the area and commute to other areas for employment.

In the case of Phelps County, the same situation is evident. Total employment of persons living in Phelps County (irrespective of their county of employment) was 5,081 in 2007, which was 625 more than the 4,456 nonfarm wage and salary jobs within the county for the same year. These data suggest that a number of workers are commuting out of Phelps County for employment on a regular basis. Also, the total number of reported employed people living in Phelps County includes those who are self employed as well as those employed in agriculture. This means the difference between total employment and nonfarm wage and salary jobs (625) likely overstates the number of workers commuting out of Phelps County.

Included in Table Two are additional employment data for 2007, showing the deviations between total employment and nonfarm wage and salary employment for the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole and for each county within the area. For the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole, the total employment of area residents (55,899), irrespective of their place of employment, is 7,005 greater than the nonfarm wage and salary employment working within the area. It appears that much of this difference could be accounted for by agricultural employment, which includes farm proprietors.

Agricultural employment shown in the table shows that 5,293 people were employed in agriculture in 2006, the last year that agricultural employment data were available. It is important to note, however, that for Nebraska as a whole, approximately 32 percent of farm operators also have a full-time job off the farm and 49 percent work off the farm, either in full or part-time employment. Therefore, it is possible that a significant number of people are commuting out of the area for employment.

**Table Two**  
**Labor Force, Employment, and Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment,**  
**Phelps County Labor Area, 2007**

County	Labor Force (2007) <sup>(a)</sup>	Total Employment (2007) <sup>(a)</sup>	Nonfarm Wage & Salary Employment (2007) <sup>(b)</sup>	Total Employment Minus NF W&S Employment	Agricultural Employment (2006) <sup>(c)</sup>
<b>Phelps</b>	<b>5,203</b>	<b>5,081</b>	<b>4,456</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>669</b>
Buffalo	28,663	28,020	27,516	504	1,162
Dawson	12,357	11,967	11,184	783	1,085
Franklin	1,813	1,760	813	947	515
Furnas	2,478	2,399	1,723	676	529
Gosper	1,036	1,002	392	610	315
Harlan	1,766	1,717	864	853	376
Kearney	4,042	3,953	1,946	2,007	642
<b>Labor Area</b>	<b>57,358</b>	<b>55,899</b>	<b>48,894</b>	<b>7,005</b>	<b>5,293</b>

<sup>(a)</sup> Labor force and employment data are measured based on the county of residence.

<sup>(b)</sup> Nonfarm Employment data are for wage and salary employment and are based on the place (county) where the individual is employed, irrespective of the the county of residence.

<sup>(c)</sup> Agricultural employment data are for 2006.

Sources: Labor Data - Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information,

[ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/laborforce\\_workforce](http://ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/laborforce_workforce). Farm Employment Data - U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Accounts Data website: <http://www.bea.gov/bea/regional/reis/>.

Further review of the data presented in Table Two provides an indication of the commuting patterns for the counties within the Phelps County Labor Area. It appears that persons from other counties are commuting into both Buffalo and Dawson Counties for employment. For most of the other counties within the area, however, a significant percentage of the employed people are commuting out of the counties for employment. In the case of Kearney County, for example, the number of employed persons living in the county is 2,007 greater than total nonfarm wage and salary employment within the county. In the case of Kearney County, a significant number of the people commuting out of the county for employment are most likely commuting to Buffalo County (City of Kearney) to work. Other counties where there are indications of significant commuting out of the county for employment include Franklin, Gosper, and Harlan. The data presented in Table Two suggest that the creation of additional jobs within the Phelps County Labor Area and Phelps County would provide opportunities for area residents to work closer to their places of residences instead of having to commute to other areas for employment.

The number of nonfarm wage and salary workers in the Phelps County Labor Area is shown by major industry sector and by county in Table Three. The reader is reminded that nonfarm wage and salary workers are counted in the county where they are

employed. Individuals with more than one job are counted at each establishment (and in each county) where they work. Table Three provides information about the number of workers in the labor area, by county and major industry category.

**Table Three**  
**Nonfarm Wage and Salary Employment, by Industry Sector**  
**Phelps County Labor Area, by County, 2007**

County	Manufact.	Constr. &	Trans.,	Trade	Financial	All Other	Govt.	Total NF	
		Mining	Whr. & Ut.					Activities	Services
<b>Phelps</b>	<b>862 *</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>1,567 *</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>4,456</b>	
Buffalo	4,164	1,809	760	4,908	890	10,716	4,269	27,516	
Dawson	3,943 *	281	393	1,743	341	2,466 *	2,017	11,184	
Franklin	14 *	14 *	40 *	157	46	157 *	385	813	
Furnas	52	94	62	280	83	554	598	1,723	
Gosper	19 *	34	23 *	62	39	47 *	168	392	
Harlan	13 *	48	39 *	213	53	214 *	284	864	
Kearney	272	115	35	322	89	618	495	1,946	
<b>Total Labor Area</b>	<b>9,067</b>	<b>2,501</b>	<b>1,449</b>	<b>8,071</b>	<b>1,649</b>	<b>15,721</b>	<b>8,490</b>	<b>46,948</b>	
<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>101,266</b>	<b>50,457</b>	<b>56,113</b>	<b>148,410</b>	<b>68,981</b>	<b>373,127</b>	<b>164,121</b>	<b>962,475</b>	

	Percent of Total NonFarm Wage & Salary Employment							Total NF
	Manufact.	Constr. & Mining	Trans., Whr. & Ut.	Trade	Financial Activities	Other Services	Govt.	
Total Labor Area	19.3	5.3	3.1	17.2	3.5	33.5	18.1	100.0
Nebraska	10.5	5.2	5.8	15.4	7.2	38.8	17.1	100.0

\* Employment estimated for county sectors where data have been withheld; values estimated by Ken Lemke, NPPD.  
 Source: Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information, [ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/laborforce\\_workforce](http://ftp.dol.state.ne.us/lmi/laborforce_workforce).

In addition to displaying the number of workers by major industry sector, Table Three also compares the percentage distribution of workers by industry in the Phelps County Labor Area with the distribution for the State of Nebraska. As these data show, the industry distribution of employment for the Phelps County Labor Area is significantly different than that for Nebraska as a whole.

The most significant deviation between Nebraska and the Phelps County Labor Area occurs in Manufacturing Sector employment, with 19.3 percent of nonfarm wage and salary workers in the Phelps County area employed in that sector, compared to 10.5 percent for Nebraska. Also, only 33.5 percent of nonfarm wage and salary workers in the Phelps County Labor Area are employed in the Other Services Sector, compared to 38.8 percent for Nebraska as a whole.

Part A of Table Four provides data showing labor cost comparisons, by county, for all private wage and salary workers for the Phelps County Labor Area. It is important to remember that the wage and salary employment is reported by county of employment, and does not provide an indication of the average weekly and annual wage for residents of the respective counties. Obviously, labor cost is an important consideration in any analysis of the labor availability in an area. Pay data for workers covered by unemployment insurance laws in Nebraska are the source of the labor cost information. Average annual pay is calculated by dividing the total payroll for wage and salary workers by the number of employees.

A review of the data in Part A of Table Four indicates that average annual salaries in Phelps County (\$30,284 for all wage and salary employees for all private industries) are

slightly higher than for the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole and all of the other counties that make up the area and are significantly less than the state average. Average annual salaries for the Phelps County Labor Area (\$29,133) were \$5,740 (16.5 percent) less than the Nebraska average; for Phelps County average annual salaries were \$4,589 (13.2 percent) less. These data suggest, of course, there would be a positive labor supply response in Phelps County to the creation of additional employment opportunities with competitive wages and benefits.

**Table Four**  
**Part A**  
**Average Annual Pay and Average Weekly Wages of Wage and Salary Workers**  
**All Covered<sup>(a)</sup> Workers and All Industries,**  
**Phelps County Study Area by County, and Nebraska, 2007**

County	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wages	Average Annual Wages
<b>Phelps</b>	<b>3,786</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>\$30,284</b>
Buffalo	22,418	\$577	\$30,007
Dawson	9,251	\$546	\$28,404
Franklin	449	\$428	\$22,239
Furnas	1,176	\$511	\$26,566
Gosper	235	\$496	\$25,795
Harlan	608	\$416	\$21,643
Kearney	1,542	\$488	\$25,397
Labor Area	39,465	\$560	\$29,133
Nebraska	761,873	\$671	\$34,873

**Table Four -- Continued**  
**Part B**  
**Average Annual Pay of Wage and Salary Workers, Covered<sup>(a)</sup> Employers, by Industry Group**  
**Phelps County Labor Area, by County, and Nebraska, 2007**

County	All Goods Producing	Manf.	Nat. Res. & Mining	All Service Providing	Trade Trans & Util	Financial Services	Bus & Prof Services	Leisure & Hospitality
<b>Phelps</b>	<b>\$40,279</b>	<b>-D-</b>	<b>\$29,795</b>	<b>\$24,997</b>	<b>\$29,122</b>	<b>\$32,996</b>	<b>\$23,440</b>	<b>\$7,652</b>
Buffalo	\$39,209	\$40,158	\$28,837	\$26,770	\$23,888	\$35,016	\$35,527	\$10,659
Dawson	\$34,236	\$32,486	\$26,807	\$22,663	\$25,899	\$33,112	\$22,820	\$8,800
Franklin	\$29,724	-D-	\$31,314	\$20,907	\$23,546	\$32,962	-D-	\$6,174
Furnas	\$31,370	\$34,404	\$29,577	\$25,251	\$21,944	\$31,323	\$46,254	\$6,172
Gosper	\$25,419	\$21,738	\$24,831	\$25,995	\$24,744	\$44,171	\$21,309	\$10,505
Harlan	\$23,364	\$17,264	\$29,401	\$21,303	\$22,074	\$46,435	\$23,452	\$7,235
Kearney	\$31,749	\$35,431	\$28,959	\$22,421	\$28,332	\$33,634	\$19,069	\$8,941
Nebraska	\$38,573	\$39,424	\$27,809	\$33,870	\$30,704	\$46,179	\$44,266	\$11,885

<sup>(a)</sup> Includes employers that are subject to Nebraska Employment Security Laws.

-D-: Data withheld by U.S. Department of Labor.

Sources: U.S. Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages <http://www.bls.gov/cew/> and

Nebraska Department of Labor, Labor Market Information <http://www.dol.state.ne.us/lmiindustry/index.asp>.

Part B of Table Four provides average annual wages, by county and by major industry sector, for the counties that make up the Phelps County Labor Area. As these data indicate, the highest average annual wages in the area are for wage and salary workers employed in Phelps. The average annual wage for all wage and salary workers (working) in Phelps County was \$30,284 in 2007, which was \$1,151 (4 percent) more than the

average for the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole, and \$4,589 (13.2 percent) less than the Nebraska average. A review of the industry specific data for average annual wages for Phelps County indicates that the high average annual wage results from the extremely high average wage in the goods producing, primarily manufacturing and construction sectors.

### Commuting Patterns

Table Five provides data from the 2000 Census of Population showing commuting patterns for workers living in the Phelps County Labor Area. As the data in Table Five Part A indicate, a significant number (and percentage) of workers in the area commuted outside of their county of residence for employment. Data for Phelps County indicate that 735, or 15.0 percent of the employed workers, commuted to other counties for employment. For five of the other counties in the Phelps County Labor Area, the percentage of commuters was greater than for Phelps County, and in most cases substantially greater. In the case of Gosper County, 538, or 51.6 percent of employed workers commuted out of their county of residence for employment. Other counties with a high percentage of employed workers commuting to other counties for employment include Kearney (44.1 percent), Franklin (32.8 percent), Harlan (31.9 percent), and Furnas with 21.2 percent of employed workers commuting out of their county of residence for employment.

**Table Five**  
**Commuting Data for Workers in the**  
**Phelps County Labor Area**

**Part A**  
**Commuting Outside County, 2000**

County	Working Outside County	
	Number	Percent
<b>Phelps</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>15.0</b>
Buffalo	2,042	8.8
Dawson	1,100	9.9
Franklin	531	32.8
Furnas	505	21.2
Gosper	538	51.6
Harlan	556	31.9
Kearney	1,551	44.1

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 2000*.

**Table Five -- Continued**  
**Commuting Data for Workers in the Phelps County Labor Area, 2000**

**Part B**  
**Commuting Times of Workers**

County	Less Than 10 Minutes		10-19 Minutes		20-29 Minutes		30-44 Minutes		45 + Minutes	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Phelps</b>	<b>2,271</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>1,320</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>6.9</b>
Buffalo	7,843	35.3	9,560	43.0	2,063	9.3	1,537	6.9	1,221	5.5
Dawson	4,916	46.0	3,504	32.8	1,023	9.6	727	6.8	506	4.7
Franklin	628	42.1	278	18.6	181	12.1	180	12.1	224	15.0
Furnas	1,081	48.2	530	23.6	200	8.9	251	11.2	180	8.0
Gosper	295	30.3	245	25.2	200	20.6	150	15.4	82	8.4
Harlan	597	37.4	430	26.9	208	13.0	226	14.2	135	8.5
Kearney County	1,128	34.2	786	23.8	590	17.9	592	17.9	207	6.3
<b>Labor Area</b>	<b>18,759</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>16,653</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>4,838</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>4,011</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>2,874</b>	<b>6.1</b>
Nebraska	214,676	25.8	318,145	38.2	161,468	19.4	88,452	10.6	49,940	6.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 2000*.

Table Five Part B provides further data illustrating the willingness of workers in the area to travel for employment. For the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole, there were 6,885 workers in 2000, or 14.6 percent of residents employed outside of their home, which traveled 30 minutes or more commuting to their place of employment. In the case of Franklin, 27.1 percent traveled 30 minutes or more to their place of employment, while for Gosper the workers traveling 30 minutes or more accounted for 23.9 percent. For Nebraska as a whole, the comparable percentage (traveling 30 minutes or more for employment) was 16.6 percent.

**Population Trends**

The data provided in Table Six show population trends for the Phelps County Labor Area, by county, and for Nebraska for the 1950–2007 period. As these data indicate, the population of the Phelps County Labor Area was 98,080 in 2000. The Phelps County Labor Area population grew by 13.5 percent from 1950 to 2000 and grew 0.7 percent from 2000 to 2007. Population in Phelps County totaled 9,747 in 2000 and had grown by 7.7 percent from 1950 to 2000. During the latest Census decade of the 1990s, the Phelps County population increased by 0.3 percent, compared to the increase for the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole of 10.3 percent, and to the State rate of growth of 8.4 percent.

**Table Six**  
**Population in the Phelps County Labor Area, by County, and Nebraska**  
**Selected Years, 1950–2007**

COUNTY	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2007	% Chg. 1950–2000	% Chg. 2000–07
Nebraska	1,325,510	1,411,330	1,485,333	1,569,825	1,578,385	1,711,263	1,768,331	29.1	3.3
<b>Phelps</b>	<b>9,048</b>	<b>9,800</b>	<b>9,553</b>	<b>9,769</b>	<b>9,715</b>	<b>9,747</b>	<b>9,175</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>-5.9</b>
Buffalo	25,134	26,236	31,222	34,797	37,447	42,259	44,976	68.1	6.4
Dawson	19,393	19,405	19,467	22,304	19,940	24,365	24,744	25.6	1.6
Franklin	7,096	5,449	4,566	4,377	3,938	3,574	3,158	-49.6	-11.6
Furnas	9,385	7,711	6,897	6,486	5,553	5,324	4,732	-43.3	-11.1
Gosper	2,734	2,489	2,178	2,140	1,928	2,143	1,971	-21.6	-8.0
Harlan	7,189	5,081	4,357	4,292	3,810	3,786	3,392	-47.3	-10.4
Kearney	6,409	6,580	6,707	7,053	6,629	6,882	6,602	7.4	-4.1
<b>Labor Area</b>	<b>86,388</b>	<b>82,751</b>	<b>84,947</b>	<b>91,218</b>	<b>88,960</b>	<b>98,080</b>	<b>98,750</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>0.7</b>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population, 1950-2000* and Annual Population Estimates, 2007.

Table Seven shows the age distribution of the resident population. Obviously, the age distribution of the population is important when evaluating the potential labor supply in an area. A key variable is the number of people in the working age populations of the counties making up the Phelps County Labor Area. In 2006, there were 4,683 people in Phelps County between the ages of 25 and 64, which represented 49.6 percent of the total population, compared to 48.3 percent of the population for the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole and 50.8 percent of the Nebraska population in this age range.

**Table Seven**  
**Age Characteristics of the Population, Phelps County Labor Area,**  
**by County, and Nebraska, 2006**

COUNTY	0–14		15–24		25–44		45–64		65–Older		Median Age
	Number	% <sup>(a)</sup>	Number	% <sup>(a)</sup>	Number	% <sup>(a)</sup>	Number	% <sup>(a)</sup>	Number	% <sup>(a)</sup>	
<b>Phelps</b>	1,826	19.3	1,184	12.5	2,111	22.4	2,572	27.2	1,749	18.5	42.3
Buffalo	8,605	19.6	9,245	21.0	11,429	26.0	9,616	21.9	5,059	11.5	31.1
Dawson	6,350	25.4	3,286	13.1	6,178	24.7	6,029	24.1	3,175	12.7	35.2
Franklin	546	16.3	433	12.9	692	20.7	885	26.4	792	23.7	45.0
Furnas	896	17.9	591	11.8	983	19.6	1,370	27.4	1,163	23.2	45.5
Gosper	361	18.3	205	10.4	376	19.0	586	29.6	450	22.8	46.4
Harlan	561	16.3	411	11.9	623	18.1	1,032	29.9	819	23.8	46.9
Kearney	1,250	18.7	896	13.4	1,618	24.1	1,876	28.0	1,061	15.8	41.1
<b>Labor Area</b>	<b>18,584</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>14,944</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>21,769</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>21,058</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>12,388</b>	<b>14.0</b>	<b>35.1</b>
Nebraska	367,141	20.8	264,120	15.0	458,669	26.0	437,021	24.8	234,655	13.3	36.0

<sup>(a)</sup> Percent of total population for each respective area.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Estimates, by Age, 2006*.

Table Eight provides information showing population, the natural increase (births minus deaths), and net migration for the 1990–2000 period for Nebraska, for Phelps County, and for the Phelps County Labor Area. As these data show, the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole experienced net in-migration during the Census decade of the 1990s, while Phelps and Franklin Counties experienced net out-migration. As indicated in the table, net in-migration for the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole accounted for

population growth of 5,781 people during the decade, contributing to a population increase equal to 6.5 percent of the 1990 population. In the case of Phelps County, net out-migration during the 1990s totaled 65 people, or 0.7 percent of the 1990 population.

**Table Eight**  
**Population, Births, Deaths and Migration, Phelps County Labor Area,**  
**by County, 1990–2000**

County	Population		1990–1999			Net Migration, 1990–2000	
	1990	2000	Births	Deaths	Nat. Incr.	Number	% 1990 Pop.
Phelps	9,715	9,747	1,281	1,184	97	-65	-0.67
Buffalo	37,447	42,259	5,516	3,016	2,500	2,312	6.17
Dawson	19,940	24,365	3,840	2,349	1,491	2,934	14.71
Franklin	3,938	3,574	393	645	-252	-112	-2.84
Furnas	5,553	5,324	603	1,008	-405	176	3.17
Gosper	1,928	2,143	237	272	-35	250	12.97
Harlan	3,810	3,786	401	541	-140	116	3.04
Kearney	6,629	6,882	856	773	83	170	2.56
Labor Area	88,960	98,080	11,870	8,474	3,339	5,781	6.50
Nebraska	1,578,385	1,711,263	235,210	150,599	84,611	48,267	3.06

Sources: Population (1990, 2000) - U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of Population, 1990, 2000;  
 Births, Deaths, Natural Increase - Nebraska Department of Health; Migration - computed using  
 population and vital statistics data.

Table Nine provides information showing population, the natural increase (births minus deaths), and net migration for the 2000–2007 period. As these data show, the Phelps County Labor Area experienced significant net out-migration during this more recent seven-year period. As indicated in the table, out-migration for the Phelps County Labor Area as a whole accounted for population decline of 3,213 during the 2000–2007 period, contributing to a population decrease equal to 3.3 percent of the 2000 population. In the case of Phelps County, net out-migration during this seven-year period was 599, or 6.1 percent of the 2000 population. These data suggest that job growth will be an important factor in stabilizing the area’s population base and that companies offering good paying jobs will be welcomed into the Phelps County Labor Area.

**Table Nine**  
**Population, Births, Deaths, and Migration, Phelps County Labor Area,**  
**by County, 2000–2007**

County	Population		2000–2007			Net Migration, 2000–2007*	
	2000	2007	Births	Deaths	Nat. Incr.	Number	% 2000 Pop.
Phelps	9,747	9,175	836	809	27	-599	-6.10
Buffalo	42259	44976	4545	2374	2171	546	1.30
Dawson	24365	24744	3220	1563	1657	-1,278	-5.20
Franklin	3574	3158	222	379	-157	-259	-7.20
Furnas	5324	4732	384	560	-176	-416	-7.80
Gosper	2143	1971	169	198	408	-580	-27.10
Harlan	3786	3392	224	304	-80	-314	-8.30
Kearney	6882	6602	547	514	33	-313	-4.50
Labor Area	98,080	98,750	10,147	6,701	3,883	-3,213	-3.30
Nebraska	1,711,263	1,768,331	187,564	109,569	77,995	-20,927	-1.20

\* Net Migration from the Bureau of the Census estimates, includes residual component not shown separately.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Estimates, 2007, and Components of Population Change, 2000–2007*.

### **Competitive Employment and Career Opportunities**

An employer providing jobs with competitive wages and benefits and offering career opportunities would be a welcome addition to the employment base in the Phelps County Labor Area and in Phelps County. The expected response to such employment opportunities would be significant, and it is anticipated that there would be an adequate labor supply response for a prospective new employer offering competitive wages and benefits in the Phelps County area. The labor force, employment, and demographic data presented in this report illustrate quite clearly that there is a sufficiently large labor force and population base living within the Phelps County Labor Area, and that significant numbers of persons living in the area are commuting to other areas for employment.

In conclusion, the data and analysis presented in this report indicate that the Phelps County Labor Area and Phelps County would be able to provide a significant number of dedicated and skilled workers to meet the needs of additional employers in the area. While this report has not estimated a precise number of people that might be available to a prospective new employer in the Phelps County area, it is anticipated that if attractive working conditions with competitive wages and employee benefits were offered, a prospective new employer would be able to select their workforce from a substantial pool of applicants.

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