For 10 weeks in summer 2018 University of Nebraska–Lincoln students Christy Cooper and Shelby Utech worked, served and lived in Cozad, Neb., (estimated population 3,805) through Rural Futures Institute (RFI) Student Serviceship.

With their lead mentor Jennifer McKeone, Cozad Economic Development Director, Christy and Shelby launched and executed a number of future-focused projects related to “place making.” Their work provided the community the capacity, energy and insights to pursue and implement projects that created a sense of place and that generated economic activity.

"The most valuable lesson learned from the experience was by Cozad.
It isn’t only about jobs and housing to attract new talent, it is about having that talent fall in love with what and who is already here. And inviting and allowing them to put their own mark on making it better."

– Jennifer McKeone, Cozad Economic Development Director
TOTAL ESTIMATED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY* $30,865

MUSIC MONDAYS $15,050

Held six Mondays throughout the summer, this event series attracted visitors to downtown Cozad with food vendors and musical performances. The purpose was to showcase the community, bring individuals into local businesses and museums and promote the philanthropic sponsors. The Serviceship students implemented key parts of the events, which will be held again in summer 2019.

ANNUAL IMPACT:

1,825 PEOPLE
Estimated total attendance
30% of attendees from out of town (550 attendees)

$10,175
Estimated food & beverage sales

$4,875
Spent implementing the event and bringing music talent into the community

YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CAMP $3,815

This two-week program facilitated the launch of 11 entrepreneurs ages 10-14. These entrepreneurs sold their products at the first Music Monday hosted by the community. Facilitated by Janita Pavelka, author of Start Young, this camp was possible due to the capacity created from the Serviceship students.

IMPACT:

11 BUSINESSES
Launched by young entrepreneurs

$2,715
Invested in implementing the program

$1,100
Minimum Revenue

FIRST IMPRESSIONS $12,000

The community of Cozad teamed up with Ogallala, Neb., to evaluate and make recommendations to enhance the “first impression” of each community. Serviceship students created and implemented recommendations. Specifically, Shelby developed marketing materials for the commercial and residential lots owned by the Cozad Development Corporation (CDC). As a result of this visibility of CDC assets, a piece of land was sold to a business that is moving into the community.

FUTURE IMPACT:

1 NEW BUSINESS
Locating to Cozad

$300,000
Expected investment for a new building

4-5 JOBS
Brought to the community

*revenue-generating activities related to the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods and services

Economic activity is estimated based on the expenditures of final goods and services related to these community projects. These estimates use the market value of final goods and services and are based on interviews conducted with the community mentor and students.