NEBRASKA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Common COURAGE

2026 ANNUAL CELEBRATION & TRAINING



KEARNEY, NEBRASKA

NOVEMBER 12, 2026

All across Nebraska, neighbors are stepping up and communities are standing together. It's collective action—a common courage—that creates lasting change.

Nebraskans know a community's size does not dictate its dreams. They're choosing hope, generosity, and abundance because everything we need is already here. Together, we'll explore what Common Courage looks like and how each of us can help write the next chapter for our communities.

This is your official guide to the day, but feel free to reach out to an NCF staff member if there is anything we can do to make your learning experience more comfortable and enjoyable! Together a Greater Nebraska!

SCHEDULE

7:00	**AM**	Registration
8:30	**AM**	Opening Plenary
9:00	**AM**	Idea Friendly Communities
10:30	**AM**	Off the Beaten Path
11:30	**AM**	Lunch
12:15	**PM**	Afternoon Breakouts | Round A
1:30	**PM**	Afternoon Breakouts | Round B
2:45	**PM**	Afternoon Breakouts | Round C
3:45	**PM**	Closing Plenary
5:00	**PM**	Expo & Social Hour
6:30	**PM**	Banquet

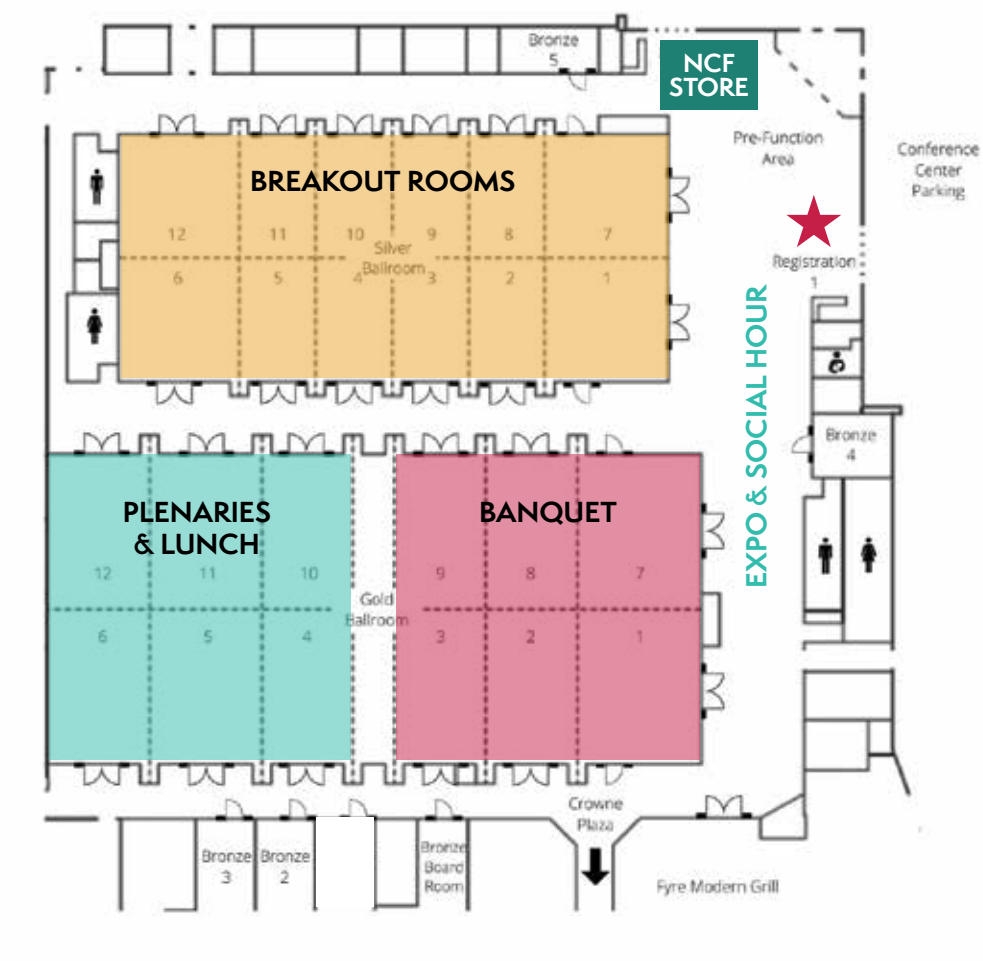
GET CONNECTED

Wi-Fi Network: Younes Conference North
No password needed.

NEBRASKA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

ANNUAL CELEBRATION AND TRAINING LOCATIONS

Younes Conference Center North



BE SOCIAL, SHARE!

Tag us in your posts today so we can share with the rest of the NCF network and beyond!

Scan the QR code to contribute to our 2026 Annual Celebration photo album which will be on display throughout the day. And be sure to take advantage of our photo area, located in the Pre-Function Area.

Training Session Information

7:00 AM — **REGISTRATION OPENS**

Younes Conference Center North (Pre-Function Area)

Check-in at the registration desk and receive your swag bag and materials for the day. Grab a cup of coffee, say hi to your neighbor, and get ready to spend the day building connections and shaping Greater Nebraska's future together!

8:30 AM — **Welcome**

General Plenary Room (Gold 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12)

We'll kick off Affiliated Fund Training by celebrating the people and partnerships that make Nebraska communities thrive. Together, we'll explore what Common Courage means: neighbors stepping forward, sharing their gifts, and taking action together to create the places we want to call home.

9:00 AM — **Idea Friendly Communities with Becky McCray**

General Plenary Room (Gold 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12)

Becky McCray is a lifelong entrepreneur, cattle rancher, and co-founder of SaveYour.Town who knows rural life firsthand. A former small-town city administrator and nonprofit executive, Becky lives in a community of just 30 people. Drawing on her award-winning book, *The Idea Friendly Guide*, she'll share a practical, research-backed approach to community change that helps people turn ideas into action with less formality and more participation. Discover how small steps, local connections, and everyday leadership can help communities thrive.

10:00 AM — **BREAK**

10:30 AM — **Off the Beaten Path: Stories of Common Courage**

General Plenary Room (Gold 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12)

Common Courage doesn't always make headlines, but it changes communities every day. Hear a series of inspiring stories from people who are choosing bold, unexpected approaches to strengthen their places, then reflect on what their experiences might mean for your own community.

LUNCH
11:30 AM–12:15 PM

11:30 AM — **No Agenda Lunch**

General Plenary Room (Gold 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12)

Enjoy your lunch reconnecting with your peers in the NCF network.

EXPO EXPLORATION
ALL DAY

Pre-Function Area

The Affiliated Fund Expo is an opportunity to celebrate the creativity, leadership, and Common Courage found throughout the NCF network. Explore displays from affiliated funds across the state, exchange ideas with fellow community leaders, and discover how communities of every size are creating lasting impact.

AFTERNOON BREAKOUTS

ROUND A | 12:15–1:00 PM

- Community Impact
- Governance and Leadership Development
- Marketing and Communications
- Donor Development and Stewardship

Silver 12 Start with Why: Finding Your Voice and Telling Your Story	*Silver 11*	*Silver 10* The Culture We Create	*Silver 9* Making Room at the Table	*Silver 8*	*Silver 7* The Things We Create Together
Silver 6 Leading Like Nature: Adapting and Growing Through Change	*Silver 5* Discovering the Glass Half-Full: An Introduction to ABCD	*Silver 4* Community Visioning in Action	*Silver 3* Navigating Meaningful Donor Conversations	*Silver 2* Five to Thrive Basics	*Silver 1* Stewardship: From First Gift to Future Legacy

BREAKOUT TITLE	LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	PRESENTERS INCLUDE
Stewardship: From First Gift to Future ***Sessions A & B***	*Silver 1* Every gift begins a relationship. Stewardship is about building and nurturing those relationships with people who invest in the future of their communities. From a donor's first gift to a documented planned gift, every interaction is an opportunity to deepen trust and connection. Explore simple, meaningful ways to steward relationships at every stage.	**Jana Jensen** *NCF* **Becky Ries** *NCF* **Vickie Ference** *Valley County*
Five to Thrive Basics ***Sessions A & C***	*Silver 2* What if every affiliated fund could tap into the wealth being transferred from one generation to the next? Explore Five to Thrive, NCF's approach to helping affiliated funds have planned giving conversations. Learn six key actions that can help communities thrive and practical ways to engage friends, neighbors, and professional advisors. Leave with ideas you can take back to your community.	**Todd Mekelburg** *NCF* **Peggy Been and Kent Been** *McCook*
Navigating Meaningful Donor Conversations ***Sessions A & C***	*Silver 3* Strong relationships are at the heart of successful fundraising. In this interactive session, build confidence and skills for meaningful one-on-one donor conversations. Explore how to prepare, ask thoughtful questions, listen for opportunities, and confidently invite support. Network volunteers and NCF staff will share real-world stories, lessons learned, and practical tools you can use right away.	**Amy Sandeen** *NCF* **McKenzie Behrendt** *Ravenna*

BREAKOUT TITLE	LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	PRESENTERS INCLUDE
Community Visioning in Action ***Session A only***	*Silver 4* What happens after a community creates a shared vision for the future? Hear stories of courage, collaboration, and action that transformed community aspirations into meaningful results.	**Mike Peterson** *NCF* **Elizabeth Troyer-Miller** *NCF* **Channing Reha and Mikayla Doht** *Pender-Thurston*
Discovering the Glass Half-Full: An Introduction to Asset-Based Community Development ***Session A only***	*Silver 5* In this introductory session, you'll learn the principles of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and gain practical knowledge of asset mapping—a tool used to uncover the strengths of individuals, local groups, and institutions in your community. This interactive workshop shifts your mindset from scarcity to abundance, introducing an approach that builds stronger communities from the inside out.	**Kara Asmus** *NCF* **Shawn Ryba** *NCF* **Hannah Miller and Natalie Roberts** *ABCD Fellows*
Leading Like Nature: Adapting and Growing Through Change ***Session A only***	*Silver 6* Nature offers powerful lessons for how we lead, grow, and navigate change. In this session, we will explore how living systems can inform the way we approach leadership, organizational development, and community change. Consider how these insights can help affiliated funds respond to changing circumstances, recognize new possibilities, and build the relationships and capacity needed to thrive over time.	**Kathy Allen**
The Things We Create Together ***Session A only***	*Silver 7* Greater Nebraska is filled with creative and cultural abundance. Place-based arts experiences give us a reason to gather, a way to share our gifts, and an invitation to participate in our homeplaces. Together, we'll explore how creativity can strengthen civic health by helping people connect, contribute, see one another differently, and experience the powerful truth that we belong to something we help create.	**Becky Boesen** *NCF* **Matt Sehnert** *McCook*
Making Room at the Table ***Sessions A & C***	*Silver 9* A thriving FAC makes room for new people, new leadership, and new ways to stay connected. In this interactive session, we'll envision the FAC your community needs next, identify people and perspectives to invite in, explore how to intentionally share leadership, and create meaningful ways for longtime members to step back without stepping away.	**Maggie Smith** *NCF*

BREAKOUT TITLE	LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	PRESENTERS INCLUDE
The Culture We Create ***Sessions A & C***	*Silver 10* Strong FACs depend on people who feel comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, disagreeing respectfully, and stepping forward. Explore practical ways leaders can create an environment where people feel heard, valued, and willing to take risks. Through real-world scenarios and reflection, consider how everyday leadership choices shape the culture of your FAC.	**Anders Olson** *NCF*
Start with Why: Finding Your Voice and Telling Your Story ***Sessions A & B***	*Silver 12* Every affiliated fund in the NCF network has a unique story—sometimes it just needs to be rediscovered. In this session, we'll reflect on the reasons we became involved with an affiliated fund and discuss how Fund Advisory Committee members can authentically and effectively communicate their vision to the people and the places they love.	**Michael Wunder** *NCF* **Amelia Hakl** *Spencer*

BREAK 1:00–1:30 PM

AFTERNOON BREAKOUTS

ROUND B | 1:30–2:15 PM

- **Community Impact**
- **Governance and Leadership Development**
- **Marketing and Communications**
- **Donor Development and Stewardship**

Silver 12 **Start with Why: Finding Your Voice and Telling Your Story**	*Silver 11*	*Silver 10* **The Courage to Post: Social Media Best Practices**	*Silver 9* **Cultivating What's Already There**	*Silver 8* **ABCDs of Youth Engagement**	*Silver 7* **Abundance Beyond the Balance Sheet**
Silver 6 **An Invitation to Shape Our Next Learning Practice in the NCF Network**	*Silver 5* **Leading Your Team: How to Empower, Inspire, and Keep Your FAC on Track**	*Silver 4* **Leadership from Every Seat**	*Silver 3* **Courageous Conversations: Building Trust and Connection with Donors**	*Silver 2* **Five Planned Gifts Everyone Should Know About**	*Silver 1* **Stewardship: From First Gift to Future Legacy**

BREAKOUT TITLE	LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	PRESENTERS INCLUDE
Stewardship: From First Gift to Future Legacy ***Sessions A & B***	*Silver 1* Every gift begins a relationship. Stewardship is about building and nurturing those relationships with people who invest in the future of their communities. From a donor's first gift to a documented planned gift, every interaction is an opportunity to deepen trust and connection. Explore simple, meaningful ways to steward relationships at every stage.	**Jana Jensen** *NCF* **Becky Ries** *NCF* **Ryan Hillen** *Leigh*
Five Planned Gifts Everyone Should Know About ***Session B & C***	*Silver 2* Planned gifts turn a commitment to your community into a lasting legacy. Explore five planned gifts to know about: bequests, beneficiary designations, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, and gifts of appreciated assets. We'll discuss how these gifts help donors meet personal and financial goals while providing lasting support for the communities and causes they love.	**Todd Mekelburg** *NCF* **Dan Bahensky** *Kearney*
Courageous Conversations: Building Trust and Connection with Donors ***Session B only***	*Silver 3* What helps donors feel truly heard, valued, and connected to your mission? In this interactive session, practice active listening and curiosity-building techniques for meaningful conversations with donors, peers, and community partners. Explore practical approaches for finding common ground, navigating differences, and building trust. Leave with "others-focused" tools to better understand donor motivations and strengthen relationships.	**Amy Sandeen** *NCF*
Leadership from Every Seat ***Session B only***	*Silver 4* Strong governance is everyone's responsibility. Reflect on and identify tools that can help create productive meetings, support your FAC chair, and help your FAC make progress. Learn how everyday leadership from every seat around the table strengthens your FAC and community.	**Elizabeth Troyer-Miller** *NCF*
Leading Your Team: How to Empower, Inspire, and Keep Your Fund Advisory Committee on Track ***Session B only***	*Silver 5* Effective leaders can mold the success of their Fund Advisory Committee by being strategic in what they do before, during, and after the meeting. In this introductory session, current and prospective chairs, as well as those considering the chair position, will learn the simple steps they can take to build high-functioning teams with well-organized meetings.	**Kara Asmus** *NCF* **Dee Moeller** *Pender-Thurston*

BREAKOUT TITLE	LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	PRESENTERS INCLUDE
An Invitation to Shape Our Next Learning Practice in the NCF Network ***Session B only***	*Silver 6* This year we are going to launch a reflective look at our FACs, their communities, and the NCF network to see what we can learn and share to strengthen our work. This session will be focused on listening to participants to learn what new knowledge might help their FAC create deeper community impact. The topics that arise from this session will be incorporated into a focused learning project over the next year.	**Kathy Allen**
Abundance Beyond the Balance Sheet ***Session B only***	*Silver 7* Our communities are rich with capital, and not all of it fits on a balance sheet. Relationships, trust, knowledge, networks, generosity, and financial resources all shape what's possible. Together, we'll explore how bridging and bonding social capital can help us see all the abundance in our hometowns, strengthen connections, and make meaningful investments in the people and places we call home.	**Becky Boesen** *NCF*
ABCDs of Youth Engagement ***Session B only***	*Silver 8* Are you curious about the younger generations in your community? This session is for you! Together, we will put on our "curiosity glasses" and share in a conversation about the why and how of youth engagement. We'll also hear from an intergenerational group of peer mentors sharing stories of belonging, discovery, and relationships.	**Chloe Carlson** *NCF* **Jayden Meyer** *Syracuse* **Elle Sudbeck and Carlece Kenner** *Hebron* **Susan Tunnell and youth** *Minden*
Cultivating What's Already There ***Session B only***	*Silver 9* Asset mapping reveals the strengths, people, and possibilities within our communities. Building on these discoveries, this session explores how to activate assets and sustain the practice over time. Grounded in ABCD and resilience, we'll examine how connecting assets, nurturing relationships, and recognizing emerging opportunities strengthen civic health and community resilience.	**Maggie Smith** *NCF* **Melissa Norgaard** *Sidney*
The Courage to Post: Social Media Best Practices ***Session B only***	*Silver 10* Building a strong social media presence starts with consistency, not perfection. Learn simple, practical strategies to strengthen your fund's brand, share community stories, and engage supporters through Facebook and other social platforms. This session will provide easy-to-implement best practices you can put to work right away.	**Rhonda Veleba** *NCF*

BREAKOUT TITLE	LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	PRESENTERS INCLUDE
Start with Why: Finding Your Voice and Telling Your Story ***Sessions A & B***	*Silver 12* Every affiliated fund in the NCF network has a unique story—sometimes it just needs to be rediscovered. In this session, we'll reflect on the reasons we became involved with an affiliated fund and discuss how Fund Advisory Committee members can authentically and effectively communicate their vision to the people and the places they love.	**Michael Wunder** *NCF* **Amelia Hakl** *Spencer*

BREAK 2:15–2:45 PM



AFTERNOON BREAKOUTS

ROUND C | 2:45–3:30 PM

- **Community Impact**
- **Governance and Leadership Development**
- **Marketing and Communications**
- **Donor Development and Stewardship**

Silver 12 **Shoot with Purpose: Smartphone Photography and Videography**	*Silver 11*	*Silver 10* **The Culture We Create**	*Silver 9* **Making Room at the Table**	*Silver 8* **The Power of "With": Youth Engagement**	*Silver 7* **The Nuts and Bolts of Grantmaking**
Silver 6	*Silver 5* **Courage to Start: Exploring Your FAC's Role in Housing**	*Silver 4* **Asking Differently: A Courageous Invitation**	*Silver 3* **Navigating Meaningful Donor Conversations**	*Silver 2* **Five Planned Gifts Everyone Should Know About**	*Silver 1* **Five to Thrive Basics**

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Five to Thrive Basics ***Sessions A & C***	*Silver 1* What if every affiliated fund could tap into the wealth being transferred from one generation to the next? Explore Five to Thrive, NCF's approach to helping affiliated funds have planned giving conversations. Learn six key actions that can help communities thrive and practical ways to engage friends, neighbors, and professional advisors. Leave with ideas you can take back to your community.	**Becky Ries** *NCF* **Ronda Graff** *McCook*

BREAKOUT TITLE	LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	PRESENTERS INCLUDE
Five Planned Gifts Everyone Should Know About ***Sessions B & C***	*Silver 2* Planned gifts turn a commitment to your community into a lasting legacy. Explore five planned gifts to know about: bequests, beneficiary designations, charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, and gifts of appreciated assets. We'll discuss how these gifts help donors meet personal and financial goals while providing lasting support for the communities and causes they love.	**Todd Mekelburg** *NCF* **Dan Bahensky** *Kearney*
Navigating Meaningful Donor Conversations ***Sessions A & C***	*Silver 3* Strong relationships are at the heart of successful fundraising. In this interactive session, build confidence and skills for meaningful one-on-one donor conversations. Explore how to prepare, ask thoughtful questions, listen for opportunities, and confidently invite support. Network volunteers and NCF staff will share real-world stories, lessons learned, and practical tools you can use right away.	**Amy Sandeen** *NCF* **Fred Matejka** *Ravenna*
The Courageous Invitations: Lessons from FAC Leaders ***Session C only***	*Silver 4* Fundraising is not about convincing people to give. It is about inviting them to invest in a future they value. Join two experienced FAC volunteer fundraisers for a candid coaching conversation about building relationships, overcoming hesitation, and implementing practical approaches that can help inspire generosity and grow your unrestricted endowment.	**Elizabeth Troyer-Miller** *NCF* **Shane Baack** *Seward County* **Adam Cerv and Lee Schneider** *Clarkson*
Courage to Start: Exploring Your FAC's Role in Housing ***Session C only***	*Silver 5* FACs have opportunities to contribute to all kinds of quality-of-life efforts, and housing is an important issue for communities across Nebraska. Explore how housing shapes who moves in, who stays, and who thrives. Learn how other FACs are engaging in this complex issue and consider the role your FAC might play in strengthening housing opportunities in your community.	**Shawn Ryba** *NCF* **Bev Hansen** *Bertrand* **Beth Roelfs** *Diller* **Jon Schmaderer** *Stuart*



NCF T-SHIRTS FOR SALE

$25 each. Quantities are limited. Get yours today at the NCF store!

HOURS: 7:00 AM–4:30 PM

BREAKOUT TITLE	LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION	PRESENTERS INCLUDE
The Nuts and Bolts of Grantmaking ***Session C only***	*Silver 7* Grantmaking is one of the most tangible ways an affiliated fund supports its community. Explore what makes a strong grantmaking process, from receiving and reviewing requests to making decisions and following through. We'll cover the essentials FAC members need to know, share practical guidance, and leave plenty of room for the questions that come up along the way.	**Mike Peterson** *NCF* **Kimberly Bilder** *NCF* **Les Long** *NCF* **Dan Miller** *Shickley*
The Power of "With": Youth Engagement ***Session C only***	*Silver 8* What happens when all generations are invited to shape the future of their communities? A whole lot of goodness! In this session, we'll share firsthand stories of what's possible when young people and adults build together, along with practical strategies and tools available across the NCF network to help unleash creative youth engagement!	**Chloe Carlson** *NCF* **Gracie Neth and Anna Tullis** *Arnold* **Hannah Miller and Joe Kamler** *Shickley*
Making Room at the Table ***Sessions A & C***	*Silver 9* A thriving FAC makes room for new people, new leadership, and new ways to stay connected. In this interactive session, we'll envision the FAC your community needs next, identify people and perspectives to invite in, explore how to intentionally share leadership, and create meaningful ways for longtime members to step back without stepping away.	**Maggie Smith** *NCF*
The Culture We Create ***Sessions A & C***	*Silver 10* Strong FACs depend on people who feel comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, disagreeing respectfully, and stepping forward. Explore practical ways leaders can create an environment where people feel heard, valued, and willing to take risks. Through real-world scenarios and reflection, consider how everyday leadership choices shape the culture of your FAC.	**Anders Olson** *NCF*
Shoot with Purpose: Smartphone Photography and Videography ***Session C only***	*Silver 12* Your smartphone is a powerful tool for telling your community's story. In this interactive, hands-on session, learn practical tips and techniques for capturing photos and videos that grab attention and communicate a sense of place. You'll leave with greater confidence and ideas for creating compelling visual content for social media, newsletters, websites, and more.	**Hannah Dorn** *Minden*

CLOSING PLENARY
3:45 PM

General Plenary Room (Gold 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12)

A day of learning is only the beginning. Join us as we reflect on the ideas we've explored, the relationships we've strengthened, and the opportunities ahead. Together, we'll prepare to return home ready to put Common Courage into practice.

BANQUET CHECK-IN EXPO & SOCIAL HOUR
5:00 PM

Pre-Function Area

Grab a drink and unwind as you explore the community expo and connect with old and new friends.

BANQUET
6:30 PM

Gold Ballroom 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9

Enjoy good food, great company, and inspirational stories of Common Courage as we celebrate the incredible evolution and growth of the NCF network and our efforts to build stronger communities and a Greater Nebraska!

OTHER INFORMATION

- NCF's Annual Celebration will be video recorded, audio recorded, and photographed.
- By submitting your registration, you are giving NCF permission to use your image in print publications and online.
- All times listed are Central Standard Time.
- The Affiliated Fund Annual Training registration fee will help offset a portion of the cost to provide training.
- If there is anything we can do to make your day more accommodating, don't hesitate to find an NCF staff member or visit the registration desk.

NEBRASKA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION