Nebraska appears to be bucking a trend when it comes to the business of golf. Across the nation, golfers played fewer rounds in 2011, but in Nebraska play increased. One reason is the Golf Nebraska campaign launched by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development's (DED) Travel and Tourism Division in 2011. The $500,000 campaign included paid advertising, email marketing, public relations and social media initiatives aimed at golfers in neighboring states. Gov. Dave Heineman shared information about the impact of the campaign at the Nebraska Golf Day event at Wilderness Ridge Golf Course in Lincoln.

A study by Texas A&M University indicated that more than 62,000 visitors came to Nebraska and spent more than $35 million. Nearly two-thirds of all survey respondents spent additional time and money in Nebraska because the information they received motivated them to stay extra nights. And visitors who did stay longer, many of whom golfed, averaged an additional 3.4 nights in the state.

At the event, David Honnens, executive director/CEO of the Nebraska Section of the PGA, said figures from the PGA of America show that the number of rounds played in Nebraska in 2011 increased by 0.3 percent. Rounds played in other states in the region declined by 1.0–6.6 percent. Nationally the number of rounds was down 1.2 percent. "Initiatives by golf industry organizations in Nebraska to improve the game of golf and encourage more play are showing results," said Honnens. "And the Golf Nebraska campaign was a great way to spread the word about the outstanding golf courses in our state."

At Nebraska Golf Day, representatives of the Nebraska Golf Course Superintendents Association, the Nebraska Golf Association, the Nebraska Club Managers Association, the Midwest Golf Course Owners Association, the Nebraska Women's Amateur Golf Association, the Nebraska Section of the PGA, DED and the Travel and Tourism Division joined together to explain how this $260 million industry contributes to the economy and quality of life in Nebraska.

"Nebraska Golf Day illustrates the significant role that golf plays in local communities. The support from the governor's office, state, regional and national golf organizations is evidence that golf is more than just a game. Golf fosters economic, recreational and environmental sustainability. The work being done in Nebraska is to be commended," said Rhett Evans, CEO of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America.

In addition to Evans, special guests at the event included Joe Steranka, chief executive officer of the PGA of America; Justin Apel, executive director of the Golf Course Builders Association of America; Bill Langley, Club Managers Association of America; Catherine Lang, director of the Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Kathy McKillip, director of DED's Travel and Tourism Division; and Liz Leckemby, championship director of the 2013 U.S. Senior Open Championship, which will be held at the Omaha Country Club. The Championship is expected to have more than a $30 million impact on the Nebraska economy.

The Travel and Tourism Division will continue promoting golf travel through the 2012 Nebraska Passport program. Participants can become eligible for prizes by having their passports stamped at eight courses participating in the golf tour. Details about the program and golfing opportunities in Nebraska are available at NebraskaPassport.com.