

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE
MINUTES
August 28, 2023
Heritage Bank, 310 First Street South, Willmar

Present: Tiffany Hintz, Ann Winge Johnson, Emily Lien and Pam Rosenau

Excused: Ben Carlson and Jesse Gislason

Staff: Kelsey Olson, Marketing and Communications Specialist

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelien, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Chairperson Pam Rosenau called the meeting to order at approximately 12:06 p.m.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Emily Lien, SECONDED BY Tiffany Hintz, to approve the Minutes of the July 24, 2023 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UPDATES—

Newsletter. Kelsey Olson reported the October newsletter's theme will be "Pathway to Prosperity." Hanson Silo and Pen House Boba will be featured, as well as a Latin American business to align with Hispanic Heritage month. The August newsletter highlighted the EDC's main pillars, including industrial hemp, housing, ag innovation, broadband, workforce development and support, the One-Stop-Shop, childcare, business and entrepreneurial support and the Elevate summer fellowship for high school entrepreneurs. The newsletter had an open rate of 43% and contact growth of 51.

One-Stop-Shop. The One-Stop-Shop was launched on Thursday, August 24. Sixty-one businesses registered, while only 24 logged on during the live portion of the event, indicating that live chats were not as important as access to relevant information when needed. A booth was created for each new law relating to businesses, providing statute numbers, who is affected by the new legislation, a general description, next steps and the risk for noncompliance. Many of the new laws were amendments to existing legislation. The One-Stop-Shop will be open until October 13, 2023.

NEW BUSINESS—

Rebranding – persona work. Olson presented an exercise aimed at establishing customer personas for six target audiences of the EDC. The target audiences include:

- Business owners—those who already have a business open.

Examples: Bushmills Ethanol
FedEx
Jennie-O Turkey Store
Apol's
Hemponix

Farmer's Elevators and Cooperatives

Childcare providers

- Entrepreneurs—those with an idea for a business or just starting a business.

Examples: Elevate graduates

High School Elevate fellowship students

Agg Thaw (Pen), Pen House Boba

Zach Madsen, Lakes Area Outdoors

Indoor golf simulation group

- Community Partners—organizations that already exist.

Examples: Mid Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC)

Willmar Area Community Foundation (WACF)

New London Chamber of Commerce

Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce

United Community Action Partnership (UCAP)

Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (CLUES)

Willmar Lakes Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)

Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF)

Ridgewater College

- Citizens—those living in Kandiyohi County.

Examples: Working parents with young children

People who work here

People who visit here

Non-working without children

Single people

Retirees

High school students

Rural people in need of broadband

People who work outside the county

Those who commute to Kandiyohi County for work

Remote workers

College, high school students

Children

Farmers

- Site Selectors—those representing a client looking for a place to build

Examples: White, middle-aged men

Highly educated

Financially sound

Travel a lot

Looking for service match with community

Make connections at service guilds

- Developers—person who responds to housing studies and sees the need

Examples: Ted Schmid, Avon Lumber

Motivated by personal gain

Shares in celebrations

Consistent communicator

Following is an example of an individual business owner:

Name: Bob

Age: 54

Location: A community in Kandiyohi County

Description: White male, owns his own auto mechanic business for 25 years, plans to sell in another 10 years.

Married with two kids at home, one adult child who has moved out.

Communication Preferences: Phone or email

Influencers: Dad and grandpa

Goals: Pass the business on to the children

Pain Points: Overworked, low income, does not accept Paypal, works long hours, ready for retirement, low tech

Hesitations: Not having enough staff

Transformation: Learn new ways to work, education on newer vehicles

A typical business owner in general terms:

Name: Business Owner, Kandiyohi County

Age: 18-70

Location: In town

Description: A large corporation, mom and pop shop or anything in between

Communication Preferences: Phone or email

Influencers: Church groups, neighbors, similar businesses

Goal: To grow the business, increase visibility, hire good employees

Pain Points: Not enough interested or trained job seekers

Hesitations: Not enough staff

Transformation: Connecting businesses with job seekers, bringing families to town with available housing and childcare

Typical business owner #2:

Age: Any

Description: Driven, works 10-12 hours days and 50+ hours per week. Long term or generational wealth.

Goal oriented, forward thinking, family oriented.

Communication: Chamber newsletter, Chamber Connections, radio, social media (Facebook and TikTok), personal meetings with new businesses.

Professional goals: Expand or maintain a successful company, longevity

Personal goals: Be able to retire successfully, provide for family, work-life balance

Influencers: Digital truth telling, other business owners

Pain Points : Cannot afford to pay extra employees, someone else cannot do it as well as they can, too much time away from family, no time to market, lack of exposure

Hesitations: Time and commitment, lack of connections

Transformation: Help find simpler ways to market that fit their needs (a launch platform from the EDC, small business starter kit and information that will pop up on a Google search were suggested), education on social media, which is a huge marketing tool, financial assistance (provide resources for connecting with a local bank), introductions to future clients and other resources.

Entrepreneur:

Age: Young

Description: Business not started, already employed doing something else, multiple side hustles.

Communication: Social media, email, texts, face-to-face, very little phone communication

Professional goals: Build a client base, financial success

Personal goals: Keep business as long as it is a passion, become self-supporting

Influencers: Google, social media

Hesitations: Website library isn't built yet, perception that EDC works only with large projects. (EDC needs to tell more stories about small business successes)

Pain Point: Having enough time to start a business

Transformation: EDC becoming influencer for resources for success, education

Citizen:

Age: 18-91

Description: Passionate, community driven, 78% white, hardworking, children, full- and part-time jobs, single and dual households, middle class to low income, high incomes. Division among communities, pride within a specific community, but lack of county pride.

Communication: Newspaper (West Central Tribune has diminished, replaced by Lakes Area Review, Raymond-Prinsburg News, Clara City Herald, Kerkhoven Banner and Willmar Reminder), online, radio, television, county-sponsored communications such as Kandi 911, Facebook and other social media.

Influencers: political powers, family, friends outside the county, neighbors, spiritual leaders, noisy people on social media, organizations in town, small businesses

Professional Goals: Have a well-rounded housing base, keep college kids in the county

Personal Goals: Good childcare and education system, good quality of life, green space, health, safety, retail access, solid internet, balanced life, a nice house, be able to afford to send kids to college and retire

Pain Points: Lack of time, communication and knowledge, lack of EMTs for safety, finances, accessibility, work-life balance

Hesitation : Lack of knowledge, EDC doesn't relate to their lives (not important enough to learn about it), no ownership or stakeholder

Transformation: EDC builds partnerships, addresses housing, broadband and childcare, tell personal success stories.

A special meeting will be held at noon on September 5, 2023 at Heritage Bank. Personas will be created for community partners and local governments to determine if the two can be grouped as one target audience. The proposed new name will be discussed with an option to explore other ideas. Taglines will be discussed.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:39 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next meeting is **12 noon, Tuesday, September 5, 2023** in-person at the Community Room, Heritage Bank.