

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD OF DIRECTORS (OB) MEETING
MINUTES
April 11, 2019
EDC Board Room, Willmar

Present: Art Benson, Rollie Boll, Jesse Gislason and Kerry Johnson

Ex Officio: Roger Imdieke

Via Phone: Donna Boonstra and Les Heitke

Excused: Kelly TerWisscha

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

Guest: Sarah Swedburg, Interim Development Director, City of Willmar

Secretarial (via phone): Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Vice President Kerry Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 11:02 a.m.

AGENDA—The following additions were made to the Consent Agenda under Approve: item 5, transfer of \$50,000 USDA grant funds, when received, payable to Christianson PLLP for the Simply Shrimp grant and item 6, payment of \$3,040 to the Regents of the University of Minnesota for honorariums and mileage expenses for the speakers and organizers of the Retail Design Business Workshops by the Center for Retail Design and Innovation.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Boll, SECONDED BY Art Benson, to approve the Agenda and revised Consent Agenda as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

CONSENT AGENDA—

- Approve:
1. Minutes of March 14, 2019 meeting
 2. Financial reports as of March 31, 2019
 3. Transfer of \$35,000 USDA grant funds for Simply Shrimp to Christianson PLLP
 4. Payment of REDstar bill for \$2,266.67 from the Marketing and Public Relations Committee's budget
 5. Transfer of \$50,000 USDA grant funds, when received, payable to Christianson PLLP for the Simply Shrimp grant
 6. Payment of \$3,040 to the Regents of the University of Minnesota for honorariums and mileage expenses for the speakers and organizers of the Retail Design Business Workshops by the Center for Retail Design and Innovation

Accept: Committee/Subcommittee Minutes

1. Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development 2/21/2019
2. Broadband and Advanced Technology 3/4/2019
3. Business Retention Expansion/Recruitment (BRE) 3/1/2019
4. Leisure Travel 3/4/2019
5. Marketing and Public Relations 2/25/2019

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Annual Planning Session Review. Aaron Backman presented a draft of the 2019 Planning Session Summary and drafts of the Action Planning Worksheets (see attached). The following priority areas were determined for 2019: Agriculture, Broadband, Business Support and Workforce Development with continued participation in the county Childcare Innovation Project.

The board questioned if a separate Workforce Development Committee should be formed? Rollie Boll recommended the BRE Committee come up with a recommendation. Backman stated he presented the two worksheets to the BRE Committee and he is awaiting their response. Backman and Connie Schmoll have discussed creating a new committee, who would be the liaison and how it would affect their workload. Schmoll stated the committee will need active leaders, who can take charge. Les Heitke suggested the BRE Committee spend some time looking at the priority areas and trying to define a work plan for a new committee. Heitke expressed concern with the limited time staff has and suggested an intern could be engaged. Backman suggested co-chairs for the BRE Committee with Sam Bowen leading the Workforce priority and he has spoken with Dan Tempel, who is interested in the Business Support priority area. Les Nelson is vice chair of the BRE Committee. Backman stated the committee has changed from hearing reports to being more brainstorming active. Board Vice Chair Johnson suggested Mary Warszynski of Employment Plus be invited to join the BRE Committee.

Schmoll reviewed the objectives for the Agricultural Innovation priority area and stated the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee already has a couple of subcommittees working on specific projects.

Schmoll reported the Broadband Committee stepped back for a bit after the state grant was returned and is now contacting and giving presentations to townships and providing education on broadband. Meetings with two townships have been held and two more are scheduled. Schmoll and a few committee members attended Broadband Day on the Hill in St. Paul.

Vice Chair Johnson noted that Duinincks had a post on its Facebook showing high school seniors signing letters of intent to work with Duinincks after graduation.

NEW BUSINESS—There was no new business.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Willmar/Willmar Industrial Park. Backman reported he received a phone call from the CBRE representative right before today's meeting, who would like to talk more this afternoon about a new project unrelated to the logistics company. Backman reported there may be a project for the Willmar Industrial Park that may use the new rail spur. The agreements for the Wye project have been signed. A groundbreaking ceremony is being planned for May or June and they are attempting to get federal rail representatives to attend, as well as representatives of the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Dooley's Petroleum is looking at a possible fuel center that will require rail access on the west side of the 4th Addition. Lisa Hughes of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development also contacted the EDC about a company that may need rail access. Sarah Swedburg reported Herzog closed on its purchase of 15 acres; the City of Willmar is still finalizing the Development Agreement as to road improvements with the county. Another local developer is requesting a tax abatement for a 24-unit project, most of which are three bedroom, family/workforce and market-rate housing with a playground near Ridgewater College. The developer contacted the City of Willmar in November and only now contacted the EDC. Each jurisdiction can opt in or opt out of a tax abatement. The EDC discussed tax increment financing versus tax abatement and financing with the developer. There are several questions that have arisen as to the project. Backman provided helpful information to the developers and gave advice, but he will not attend the hearing. Swedburg reported she received the revised plan for the Willmar Child Care Center from Engan & Associates; Kohl's plans were received and plans have been approved for updates to Target, Arby's and Ziegler's in the next year.

Retail Business Design Workshops. Backman reported the five workshops have been very interesting and the presenters have been excellent. Nine partners, including the EDC, sponsored the workshops. Workshops were held one week and coaching sessions the following week. The final workshop was held last week and the final coaching session was yesterday. All participants received a scholarship and 18% are diverse. The workshops were recorded. Four participants will receive one-on-one technical assistance and the networking has been excellent. Each business has implemented something positive resulting from their participation. A report on the workshops will be prepared. A post workshop meeting will be held June 5, 2019. Schmoll stated the feedback has been wonderful. Swedburg and Kathy Schwantes have been working with Clean Energy Resource Teams to put on a workshop for property and business owners about energy savings.

Child Care Innovation Program. Schmoll reported the core leadership met Tuesday. Legislators are scrutinizing the childcare assistance program, which is at risk of being defunded. Southwest Initiative Foundation is seeking funding for training. The SMART goals emailed to the board are still being refined. Ridgewater College is discussing childcare training and a group is looking at financing. Art Benson suggested developing a business plan and what it would take to make a successful childcare business. Vice Chair Johnson reported the Spicer group is meeting every Friday about the Spicer daycare. The group is focusing on the Green Lake Mall and a design. The daycare will have 90 kids and only 10 of those can be infants. They will be looking at fundraising soon. The group is looking at including updates for the entire Green Lake Mall. The daycare has support from the cities of Spicer and New London and will be run by the Kandiyohi County Area Family YMCA. Schmoll stated the YMCA is looking at opening another center for infants. Backman reported Bethesda announced its senior housing campus to be built on 11 acres north of APMC in New London and has signed a

Purchase Agreement. The project will be more than a \$16 million investment. A public hearing will be held in late May.

Diverse Business Initiative. Backman reported Jennifer Mendoza, Navigator for CLUES, testified at the capitol in favor of continued funding for the workforce program. The Governor has allocated \$1.5 million for CLUES; the House has allocated \$2 million and the Senate zero. Backman has encouraged Senator Lang to meet with Chairman Senator Pratt as to funding. CLUES has two outstate programs.

Business Visits and Meetings. Backman reported the Highway 23 Coalition held its annual meeting at The 400 Club in Rockville. Speakers were Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher, Rep. Frank Hornstein, Chair of the House Transportation Finance and Policy Division and Senator Lang, member of the Senate Transportation Finance and Policy Committee. Backman reported MnDOT just announced the start date for construction of the south gap has been moved up one year and will begin in 2023. The Coalition's Legislative Committee is planning its annual fly-in to Washington, D.C. for June 18-20, 2019. The Coalition board approved five scholarships of up to \$500 each for members in good standing, who wish to participate in the fly-in. Backman requested this board consider covering the costs for Donna Boonstra to attend the trip.

IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to approve the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission reimbursing Donna Boonstra for her costs related to the Highway 23 Coalition fly-in to Washington, D.C. MOTION CARRIED.

Backman reviewed his business meetings and visits listed in his report to the board (see attached), including construction of 15th Street Flats is moving along and tenants are expected to occupy the building in late August or early September 2019. The change of venue for the West Central Area Job Fair was a good change. Vendor booths increased to 50 and there were over 370 attendees, including students. Vendors came from a 100-mile radius of Willmar. Backman announced he agreed to serve on the Ridgewater College General Advisory Council.

Backman provided information on a meeting he and Schmoll attended with the Kandiyohi County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and local United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) office about the EDC possibly taking over the HRA's Intermediary Relending Program (IRP). The total loan program is approximately \$600,000 with approximately \$158,000 outstanding in three loans. The local IRP has not been used for a new loan in the past nine years. Vice Chair Johnson stated banks originate the IRP loans and the HRA facilitates the program. The IRP is serviced by Dave Henle of Heritage Bank and the HRA has not charged any administrative fees. The IRP currently is available only to downtown Willmar businesses. If the EDC takes over the IRP, Backman would recommend the EDC review the uses, coverage area and servicing. In 2015, the EDC Joint Operations Board approved taking over the program, but nothing developed.

Schmoll reported the Ag Committee is exploring industrial hemp and yesterday visited a business that processes industrial hemp. Schmoll attended the AURI New Uses Forum, which included speakers on industrial hemp. Schmoll reviewed other business meetings and visits listed in her report (see attached), including attending the Clean Energy Resource Teams Advisory Board meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development. Boll reported the Ag Committee heard a presentation from Mike Youngerberg on the potential for a soybean crushing plant in the region. A new crushing plant is being considered for Crookston. The committee would like to have more speakers at its meetings.

Broadband and Advanced Technology. Schmoll reported the Broadband Committee is giving presentations to township boards encouraging investment for a broadband project. Hiawatha and Arvig are interested in partnering on a project, if funding partners are found.

Marketing and Public Relations. Backman reported the Marketing Committee finalized the education flyer and is starting to work on a new flyer relative to local healthcare. The committee liked the idea of creating a video of the county. Swedburg stated she is looking forward to the new city staff person coming so she can do more videos for The Buzz.

Leisure Travel. Backman reported the committee met at Rosita's for the April meeting and reviewed its attendance at sport shows.

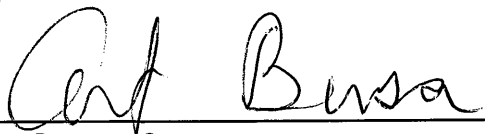
Other. Swedburg announced Minnesota Main Street will hold its annual workshop next week in Willmar; the afternoon will be on diversity and inclusion. Backman announced the EDC's Joint Powers Board will meet on April 25, 2019 and he will attend an event hosted by Hill Capitol. Swedburg stated a public meeting on development of a new city hall will be held April 16th. The City Hall Task Force is recommending the fire hall station for the location. A new building would be built for the city offices in the northeast corner of the lot. About 20,000 to 23,000 square feet is needed for the city offices; it would be a multi-level building. After a location is decided, the design will be developed.

NEXT MEETING—The next board meeting is **11:00 a.m., Thursday, May 9, 2019**, at the EDC Office, Willmar.

ADJOURNMENT—

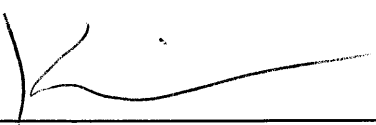
IT WAS MOVED BY Art Benson, SECONDED BY Rollie Boll, to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:52 p.m.



Art Benson, Secretary

APPROVED: 5/9/2019:



Kelly TerWisscha, President

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission

2019 Strategic Planning Session Summary

March 14, 2019 at Kandiyohi Power Cooperative Community Room

Background

The mission of the **Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC)** is to be a catalyst for economic growth of the greater Kandiyohi County Area. The Commission develops organizational priorities on an annual basis by engaging Staff, Board members, Committee Chairs, and other key stakeholders in fact-finding efforts to identify trends, challenges, and opportunities. The EDC holds a strategic planning retreat to prioritize short- and long-term goals with strategic objectives.

Process

The EDC engaged a third-party consultant, Cheryl K. Glaeser with Achieve TFC, LLC, to design a process and facilitate a strategic planning retreat with the outcome of developing a shared vision of success and key strategies that will guide the work of the Commission throughout 2019, recognizing the past goal areas and considering the changing demographics and trends impacting the EDC service area.

Advance Interviews

To ensure that the process designed would lead to desired results, 11 representatives from the EDC Boards, Staff and Committees were interviewed. These phone interviews provided a basis of understanding of current activities, influential trends, challenges and opportunities.

The interviews exposed areas of appreciation, key concerns, and potential actions for the future.

Appreciations:

- significant appreciation for the passion and commitment of the EDC staff and the impact realized through their efforts
- excitement around specific efforts pertaining to the Hwy 23 Coalition, the child care initiative, the diverse workforce initiative in partnership with Ridgewater College and CLUES, broadband, and support for existing businesses
- appreciation for the collaborative nature of the EDC and its work

Concerns:

- responding to the volatility of the economy, particularly in the agriculture sector
- being proactive in addressing changing demographics such as aging population, diversity, and workforce availability
- ensuring that we are not spreading EDC staff resources too thin
- balancing the support for existing businesses with new business recruitment

Advance Survey

In addition, EDC staff, Joint Powers and Operations Board members, committee members from the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development, Broadband and Advanced Technology, Business Retention & Expansion/Recruitment, Finance, and Marketing and Public Relations Committees, and other key stakeholders were invited to provide insights about current trends and goals by participating in a survey developed by Glaeser. A large number of respondents pointed to the strong leadership and dedication of the EDC staff. It is clear that currently engaged Board Members and other invited participants appreciate the knowledge and energy of the staff.

Trends and Influential Factors

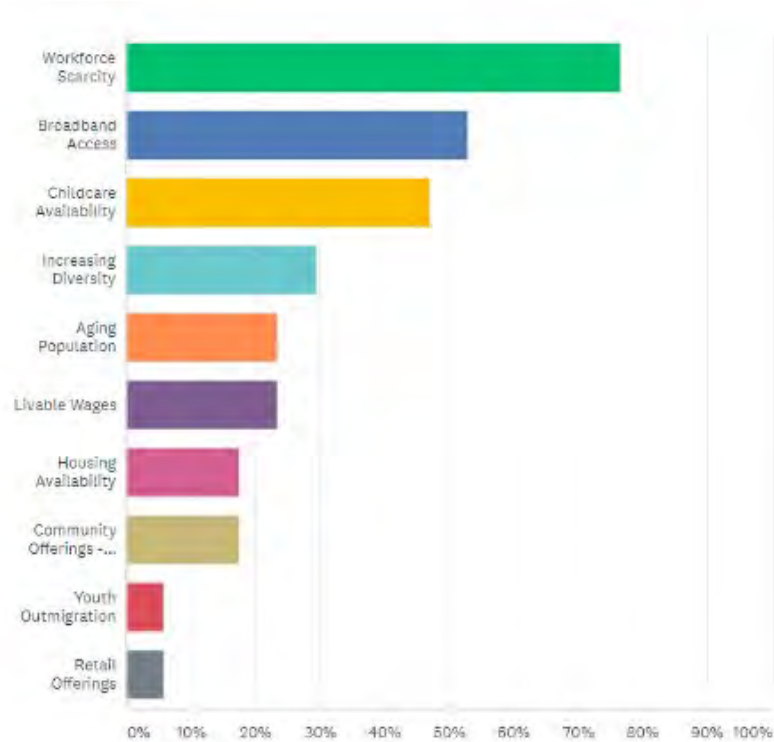
When asked to consider several trends, survey participants indicated that the trends most likely to influence the direction of the EDC are:

- Workforce scarcity (76.47%)
- Broadband access (52.94%)
- Childcare availability (47.06%)
- Increasing Diversity (29.41%)

Future Actions

When asked what near-term actions would have the greatest impact for Kandiyohi County, several themes emerged with the greatest number of survey participants indicating actions related to these top four areas:

1. Workforce (31%),
2. Childcare (25%),
3. Broadband (19%)
4. Business Recruitment (19%)



Key Challenges

- Changing demographics
- Capacity to support existing businesses; meeting their needs
- Volatility of our economy – downturns in certain sectors (e.g. agriculture); and unforeseen business loss

EDC Vision of Success

When asked what will be different in Kandiyohi County if the EDC is successful in reaching its goals, several themes emerged including:

- A thriving economy that is more diverse and steadily growing
- New businesses/employers including successful startups and larger employers in area
- Childcare shortage no longer a barrier for working families
- High-speed broadband attracts new businesses and residents
- Recognition of Willmar as an up and coming regional center
- A skilled workforce meets employer needs and increases income opportunities for families

These insights from interviews and the survey were used to determine the focus for the Strategic Planning Retreat on March 14, 2019. Insights also guided the materials to be made available to planning participants prior to and during the session. Demographics and information on trends were provided in advance to attendees in areas including Diversity and Population, Workforce, Child Care, Broadband, and Retail/Taxable Sales. *[Appendix A: Trends-Demographics Dashboards.]*

Strategic Planning Retreat

EDC staff, Joint Powers and Operations Board members, committee members from the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development, Broadband and Advanced Technology, Business Retention & Expansion/Recruitment, Finance, and Marketing and Public Relations Committees, and other key stakeholders met on March 14, 2019 for a full-day retreat.

Planning Retreat Outcomes

- Shared understanding of the vision of impact we seek through the work of the EDC
- Development of organizational priorities – overarching goals; short- and long-term objectives
- Exploration of how to reach objectives and what resources may be required
- Strengthened cohesion and common purpose among board, staff, and other key stakeholders

Mission and Vision

The group began by reviewing the EDC's existing Mission and Vision. Together they explored the EDC's purpose, using Simon Sinek's concept that "People don't buy what you do, they buy WHY you do it," to help them consider strategic priorities grounded in purpose and their vision of the impact they seek. Group thoughts on the EDC's purpose focused largely on the EDC being **a visionary organization that works toward community betterment and economic growth through collaborative efforts that build on past success and truly value and support all people and businesses.**

MISSION: To be a catalyst for economic growth of the greater Kandiyohi County Area.

VISION: To provide visionary economic development leadership creating growth, prosperity, innovation, international competitiveness, and enhanced quality of life.

Trends and Influential Factors

Together, participants explored the ways in which key economic, social, political and technological trends might affect the work of the EDC in the coming year. Referring back to the Planning Retreat Survey and the trends identified by the group (See Image 1.1), the group discussed what stood out for them, what trends might be missing, and how they might impact our work moving forward.

COUNTY PROFILE

Kandiyohi Co.

LABOR FORCE

Image 3.1

Table 10. Employment Characteristics, 2017

	Kandiyohi Co.			Minnesota	
	In Labor Force	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate	Labor Force Partic. Rate	Unemp. Rate
Black or African American	531	50.7%	12.6%	69.8%	11.0%
American Indian & Alaska Native	125	84.5%	0.0%	58.6%	13.3%
Asian or Other Pac. Islanders	162	63.3%	0.0%	71.1%	5.2%
Some Other Race	967	69.0%	8.9%	77.2%	7.5%
Two or More Races	247	72.9%	0.4%	72.5%	9.1%
Hispanic or Latino	2,228	71.4%	9.1%	76.2%	7.2%

When asked what stood out for them, participants noted the following:

- Kandiyohi labor force gains - growing faster than our overall population; commuting from outside the county; people are rejoining the workforce
- Incongruent conversation about immigration—cannot meet workforce needs without input and involvement from diverse populations
- Aging population—the benefit of wisdom and experience and how we might capture this as an opportunity
- A lot of retirement is coming, function of money, not age; the services needed for aging population is an economic issue
- All areas need addressed—How do we balance/prioritize/intertwine our efforts?

The group identified the following as potential trends that may be missing in our considerations:

- **Education** - Reassessing where education fits into the workforce – needs to be more about skills and the person, pursuing specific types of education rather than degrees - misaligned right now and creating concerns with student debt (MN ave. student debt \$31,915 is 5th highest in U.S.)
- **Technological Changes** – Rapid changes and how to balance being visionary yet reactive; balancing immediate needs with future change
- **Global Economy** - Living in a global economy and competitors are now across the world

Analysis of Trends

To further ensure common understanding of key trends and how they might influence the work of the EDC, participants worked in small groups, selecting their top interest trends to complete a scan of the strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats related to each. The trends explored included: Child Care, Diversity, Education, Technology/Globalization, and Workforce. [Appendix B: Trend Analysis]

Progress on Current Goals

Interviews and survey results indicated that the EDC is starting from a place of strength when considering their efforts toward existing goals. Aaron Backman, EDC Director, briefly reviewed the current goals of the EDC and noted milestones/accomplishments that have been reached thus far. [Appendix C: 2018 Goals Review]. Working in small groups, participants explored the lessons learned over the past twelve months.

Key Lessons Learned

- Partnerships/collaborations are very important
- Address items before they become an issue
- There is power in story telling
- Select achievable goals
- Consider staff capacity

"If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

African Proverb

Opportunities for Growth

- Better utilize the talent and expertise of committee members/volunteers
- Consider refocusing the BRE Committee to workforce or create separate committee
- Ag is still a predominant sector; understand better how it impacts the region and economy
- Explore the role of EDC as leader vs. supportive for various initiatives

Priorities - KEEP/CHANGE/ADD

The group considered what areas of current goals should be kept, which areas should be kept but changed, and what new areas we might consider adopting. Below is a chart of the priority areas that received the greatest number of votes during discussion.

KEEP – (# stars)

Business Retention & Expansion (5)
Agriculture (3)
Child Care Collaboration (3)
Entrepreneur Support (3)

CHANGE – (# stars)

Broadband (7)
Marketing (7)
Diverse Business Initiative (3)

ADD – (# stars)

Workforce Development (4)
Ag Support (3)
Marketing (3) – new focus

Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission

2019 Strategic Priority Areas

EDC Board and Committee Members and other participants explored and considered several potential priority areas for the EDC including Agriculture, Broadband, Business Retention & Expansion, Business Visits, Child Care, Diverse Workforce Training, Energy, Entrepreneur Support, Marketing, Opportunity Zones, Retail Service/Amenity Recruitment, Ridgewater College Enrollment, Transportation, and Workforce Development. A key to success is collaboration, which the group feels is a strength of the EDC. Following small group discussion and various voting methods, the group narrowed the focus to 5 major areas (listed as ranked by the group):

1. **Workforce Development:** Develop and expand workforce availability and skills to support the growth and expansion of businesses.

Potential Objectives:

- Establish a workforce development committee
- Expand diverse workforce training, building on the success of CLUES
- Work with Ridgewater College to improve enrollment and student success
- Support a Teachers of Color Pipeline Initiative in partnership with K12 and Ridgewater College
- Bring like-type industries together (focus groups by industry sector) to discuss workforce needs and explore additional employer-driven initiatives such as MAP that might be supported/started
- Video highlighting businesses of Kandiyohi County and the workforce skills/needs; Host on EDC website and promote via social media
- Develop a “Bring Them Back Campaign” with positive messaging of opportunities in the area and telling the stories of why they should want to return

Vision of Success:

Skill enhancement of potential labor market tied to local needs. Higher levels of people gaining greater employment and entering pathways that lead to careers with greater earning potential.

2. **Business Support:** Building relationships with area business, with a key intent to inform them of available resources through the EDC, better understand their challenges/needs, and help them share their successes.

Potential Objectives:

- Engage in focused one-on-one visits with existing businesses to inform them of resources and streamline complications/challenges they may have
- Develop a business support group of “like-minded businesses*” and/or “emerging entrepreneurs”; consider the 1 Million Cup model; specific mention of support for businesses started within past 5 years and those in the retail sector
- Invite bankers/accountants to a gathering to learn of EDC resources and share business needs
- Develop a “community” marketing campaign to distribute EDC offerings broadly in the area

Vision of Success:

Businesses owners are able to streamline operations and resolve barriers they may have and learn from each other’s successes and challenges. Our communities know and understand how the EDC can help businesses.

*Note: There was mention of global marketing too, however not sure where/how it fits with local Business Support. The group discussed creating a marketing piece/video about the area's quality of life and drawing in businesses by redefining demographics and information as a regional draw for national businesses.

3. **Childcare:** Continuing with the goals set forth by the Child Care Core Team

Potential Objectives:

- Increase the number of childcare options, including diverse childcare choices, available for the workforce in Kandiyohi County and in the region
- Secure sustainable solutions for existing and new childcare centers and family childcare providers, including diverse childcare

Objectives: (Insert from current) Adequate childcare viewed as essential for the economic success of the region. Group noted the tie between workforce development and childcare.

Vision of Success: [Enter info from current committee work]

Family incomes increase and existing childcare businesses are profitable. Additional childcare jobs will be filled, and more jobs become available in the child development field.

4. **Agricultural Innovation:** Understanding and responding to the ever-changing food and agriculture sectors

Potential Objectives:

- Collaborate with other agriculture and producer groups to host community conversations and/or educational forums that support producers and dispel myths around agriculture
- Recruit additional value-added agriculture processors, businesses and markets
- Create a local vision statement for agriculture as an economic driver in Kandiyohi County and share vision broadly
- Revisit the Ag BR&E results and respond with training, workshops, education

Vision of Success:

Agriculture is recognized as a healthy, strong and vibrant industry that strengthens our area. Producer living wages improve and they feel valued and supported.

5. **Broadband:** Lobby – Collaborate – Educate to provide broadband access throughout Kandiyohi County

Potential Objectives:

- Identify specific people in government that we could lobby for statutory changes that enable grants for rural Kandiyohi County
- Develop a coalition of Kandiyohi County townships willing to facilitate the investment of broadband for the benefit of their residents
- Increase our involvement in the Broadband Coalition at the state level to bring more awareness to Kandiyohi challenges (get the real story out about speeds/access) and increase opportunities for faster buildout of broadband services

Vision of Success:

Businesses are able to have employees work remotely from their homes, entrepreneurs have more opportunities to expand their businesses, students are able to do homework from home, seniors can take advantage of telemedicine healthcare, and house values increase.

Closing
(To be developed)

DRAFT

2019 Action Planning Worksheet

AGRICULTURE

Priority Area	Agriculture
Priority Summary	Understanding and responding to the ever-changing food and agriculture sectors.
Project Coordinator: (A person of interest/champion to help EDC Staff)	Dan Tepfer, Energy Management Specialist, Kandiyohi Power Cooperative
Phone/Email:	320-894-5921 / dtepfer@kpcoop.com

Strategic Priority (Stated as a goal with measurable results, not just effort)	Collaborate with other agriculture groups to support and market agriculture as an economic driver in Kandiyohi County through educational forums and innovative marketing that strengthen the ag industry sector.	
Mission Connection (How this goal aligns with the mission of the EDC)	EDC can provide visionary leadership for this sector, a strong economic driver in the region. Supporting this sector with innovative strategies leads to economic growth, prosperity and enhanced quality of life.	
Objectives How might we address this goal? (i.e. What actions/milestones might be pursued?) What resources may be needed? S – Specific M – Measurable A – Attainable R – Relevant T – Timebound	Potential Objectives	Resources Needed
	1. Collaborate with other agriculture groups and producers to host community conversations and/or educational forums that support producers and dispel myths around agriculture.	Partners and funding
	2. Recruit additional value-added agriculture processors, businesses and markets.	Recruitment efforts
	3. Create a local vision statement for agriculture as the economic driver that it is in Kandiyohi County and share the vision broadly.	Passionate leaders, writing experts and marketing personnel
	OTHER NOTES: Revisit the Ag BR&E results to identify ways to respond with training, workshops, education.	
Expected Outcomes: The impact we seek: What will be different as a result of our efforts?	Agriculture will be recognized as an important, strong and vibrant sector in our area. Producers will be valued and supported and their income will increase. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area ag producers feel supported and valued for their role in our regional economy • Agriculture is recognized broadly as a strength of the area • Producers are supported in increasing their potential for success 	

Who are the people who may be interested in supporting/working together on this goal?

Name	Skills/Resources	Email	Phone
Dan Tepfer, Energy Management Specialist	Kandiyohi Power Cooperative	dtepfer@kpcoop.com	320-894-5921
Joanna Schrupp, Manager	MinnWest Technology Campus	Joanna.Schrupp@mnwesttechnology.com	320-894-2620
Rollie Boll	Ag Banking and Member of the EDC Board	rjboll@en-tel.net	320-212-7991
Russ Peterson, Chair	Ag Professionals	Russ.Peterson@ridgewater.edu	320-905-0733
Christie Ransom	Chamber of Commerce Agri-Business Committee	cransom@willmarareachamber.com	320-231-0270
Kim Lippert, Instructor, Ag Department Leader	Ridgewater College Agriculture Programs	kim.lippert@ridgewater.edu	320-222-5272
Nick Bjornberg, Chair	Kandiyohi County Corn/Soybean Growers	nbjornberg@mvtvwireless.com	320-220-1369
Loren Molenaar, Director	Kandiyohi County Farm Bureau	lorenmolenaar@hotmail.com	320-220-1481
Donnell Williamson, Chair	Kandiyohi County Farmers Union	williamsonorganicfarm@gmail.com	320-220-3100
Krista Willis, local producer	Women in Agriculture and MARL	Kristachad_willis@msn.com	320-905-2946
Steve Olson, Executive Director	Minnesota Turkey Growers Association	steve@minnesotaturkey.com	763-682-2171

As you move further along, identify the key strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats for achieving this goal...

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many and diverse groups involved • Ag is an economic driver in our community 	Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current state of ag stress • Low commodity prices • Developing a common message
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a stronger voice and message • Youth education • Interest in value-added agriculture 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of correct information by consumers to consumers (few producers; many consumers)

2019 Action Planning Worksheet

BROADBAND

Priority Area	Broadband
Priority Summary	Lobby, collaborate and educate to secure broadband services throughout Kandiyohi County
Project Coordinator: (A person of interest/champion to help EDC Staff)	Mark Boeschen/Dave Sisser
Phone/Email:	320-212-3125 mark@firebytes.co / 320-894-8237 daves@wccwireless.com

Strategic Priority (Stated as a goal with measurable results, not just effort)	EDC provides leadership in building coalitions that support, educate and collaborate to quickly bring improvements in broadband services leading to greater opportunities for Kandiyohi County residents.		
Mission Connection (How this goal aligns with the mission of the EDC)	EDC provides visionary leadership that increases the quality of life and allows Kandiyohi County to grow, prosper and compete on an international scale.		
Objectives How might we address this goal? (i.e. What actions/milestones might be pursued?) What resources may be needed? S – Specific M – Measurable A – Attainable R – Relevant T – Timebound	Potential Objectives		Resources Needed
	1. Develop a coalition of Kandiyohi County townships willing to facilitate the investment of broadband for the benefit of their residents		Funding, time and partnerships
	2. Identify specific people in government that would carry policy bills leading to statutory changes that allow grants for the rural areas of Kandiyohi County.		Time spent talking with legislators and trips to St. Paul
	3. Increase our involvement in the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition to bring more awareness of the challenges in Kandiyohi County, including the correct information about current speeds and access.		Time and travel
Expected Outcomes: The impact we seek: What will be different as a result of our efforts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are able to do homework from home • Seniors can take advantage of telemedicine healthcare • Businesses are able to have employees work remotely from their homes • Entrepreneurs have more opportunities to expand their businesses • Agriculture professionals will be able to use precision ag data • House values increase with broadband access 		

Who are the people who may be interested in supporting/working together on this goal?

Name	Skills/Resources	Email	Phone
Connie Schmoll	EDC Business Development Specialist	Connie@kandiyohi.com	320-522-2805
Donna Boonstra, EDC Joint Operation Board and Broadband Committee	Involved in broadband for several years; skills for communicating with legislators	Donnaboo47@msn.com	320-295-3134
Art Benson, EDC Operations Board	Works in the area of technology and communications	Art@soundimagewillmar.com	320-220-1513
Dean Bouta, Bennett Office Technologies	Past chair and longtime member of Broadband committee	dbouta@bennettoffice.com	320-212-5964
Mark Boesch	Chair of Broadband Committee	mark@firebytes.co	320-212-3125
Michelle Marotzke	Broadband Committee and a shaker and mover	mmarotzke@wmu.willmar.mn.us	320-979-6751
David Sisser	Broadband Committee Vice Chair and activist	daves@wccwireless.com	320-894-8237

As you move further along, identify the key strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats for achieving this goal...

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment of Broadband Committee members • High level of interest and demand 	Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time and deployment cost constraints • Provider competition • Many personalities and agendas • Some people already receiving adequate service for current usage • Population density • Topography
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband Committee • State Border-to-Border grants • Provider interest • Working with those who are underserved • Education in the community 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laws/current language in policy • Inaccurate maps • Federal funding allows substandard projects • Telcos

OTHER NOTES:

- Need to act now; do not wait for new technology
- Imperative to get the correct information out about speeds and access.

2019 Action Planning Worksheet

BUSINESS SUPPORT



Priority Area	Business Support
Priority Summary	Supporting existing businesses through access to information and awareness of the EDC's services.
Project Coordinator: (A person of interest/ champion to help EDC Staff)	Dan Tempel, Broker/Owner, Glacial Ridge Realty
Phone/Email:	320-403-5404 / glacialridgerealty@gmail.com

Strategic Priority (Stated as a goal with measurable results, not just effort)	EDC works to build relationships with area business, with a key intent to inform them of available resources through the EDC, better understand their challenges/needs, and help them share their successes.	
Mission Connection (How this goal aligns with the mission of the EDC)	EDC catalyzes economic growth by supporting area businesses so that they can prosper, innovate and be competitive.	
Objectives How might we address this goal? (i.e. What actions/milestones might be pursued?) What resources may be needed? S – Specific M – Measurable A – Attainable R – Relevant T – Timebound	Potential Objectives	Resources Needed
	1. Engage in focused one-on-one visits with existing businesses to inform of resources and streamline complications/challenges they may have	TBD
	2. Develop a business support group of “like-minded businesses” and/or “emerging entrepreneurs;” consider the 1 Million Cup model; specific mention of support for businesses started within past 5 years and those in the retail sector	TBD
	3. Invite bankers/accountants to a gathering to learn of EDC resources and share business needs	TBD
	4. Develop a “community” marketing campaign to distribute EDC offerings broadly in the area	Center of influencers; marketing plan
Expected Outcomes: The impact we seek: What will be different as a result of our efforts?	Businesses owners are able to streamline operations or resolve barriers they may have and learn from each other's successes and challenges. Our communities know and understand how the EDC can help businesses.	

Who are the people who may be interested in supporting/working together on this goal?

Name	Skills/Resources	Email	Phone
Jesse Gislason	Business support	jessegislason@gmail.com	320.295.6938
Melissa Knott	Marketing	mknott@christiansoncpa.com	320.212.9505
Fernando Alvarado	City Government/Business support	falvarado@willmarmn.gov	320.235.2577

As you move further along, identify the key strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats for achieving this goal...

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDC Marketing Committee • EDC Staff 	Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many businesses are not aware of what the EDC has to offer • Need to break down into smart goals; specific action steps
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break down barriers with other groups • Programs like SCORE, 1 Million Cups • Mentoring/coaching arrangements 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate time/capacity • Insufficient financial resources

OTHER NOTES: Two remaining task in notes that did not fit neatly into this strategy could possibly be brought to the Marketing Committee:

1. Doing research and gathering data/demographics needed to market to restaurants and national retail so that they are drawn to Kandiyohi County
2. Being strategic in collaborating to promote the quality of life in Kandiyohi; mentions of Greg Harp's photos, PWELC as resources; mention of "Bring Them Home" campaign that was also added to the Workforce Strategy

2019 Action Planning Worksheet

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Priority Area	Workforce Development
Priority Summary	Help build a skilled workforce that meets the needs of the local economy in order to grow and support businesses.
Project Coordinator: (A person of interest/ champion to help EDC Staff)	Sam Bowen, Dean of Customized Training and Continuing Education, Ridgewater College
Phone/Email:	320-905-2269 / sam.bowen@ridgewater.edu

Strategic Priority (Stated as a goal with measurable results, not just effort)	Building a base of support and implementing innovative strategies that expand opportunities for building a skilled workforce that meets the needs of our local economy and helps businesses grow.	
Mission Connection (How this goal aligns with the mission of the EDC)	EDC would be a catalyst, providing leadership for workforce growth which increases potential for prosperity, international competitiveness and enhanced quality of life.	
Objectives How might we address this goal? (i.e. What actions/milestones might be pursued?) What resources may be needed? S – Specific M – Measurable A – Attainable R – Relevant T – Timebound	Potential Objectives	Resources Needed
	1. Establish a Workforce Development Committee to focus on specific initiatives.	People and approval
	2. Promote Ridgewater College, working with partners to improve enrollment and student success.	Planning, Details, Funding
	3. Continue to expand diverse workforce training programs like Diverse CNA/Welding	Funding, Support, Partners
	4. Establish a Teacher of Color pipeline program	TBD
Expected Outcomes: The impact we seek: What will be different as a result of our efforts?	OTHER NOTES: Insights from planning session (some could be tasks under the above Objectives) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring similar industries together (focus groups by industry sector) to discuss workforce needs and explore additional employer-driven initiatives such as MAP that might be supported/started • Video highlighting businesses of Kandiyohi County and the workforce skills/needs; Host on EDC website and promote via social media • Develop a “Bring Them Back Campaign” – positive messaging of opportunities in the area; telling the stories of why they should want to return 	
	These efforts will help grow and support businesses by addressing a major need in our regional economy—skilled workers. We will develop and implement innovative recruiting and training strategies that will set our region apart as a workforce development leader. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill enhancement of potential labor market • Higher levels of people gaining greater employment • People entering pathways that lead them to career with greater earning potential • Helping to fulfill local job market needs 	

Who are the people who may be interested in supporting/working together on this goal?

Name	Skills/Resources	Email	Phone
Eric Day, Business Service Coordinator, CMJTS	Funding, People	eday@cmjts.org	320.241.1747
Sam Bowen, Dean, Ridgewater College	Customized Training and Continuing Education	sam.bowen@ridgewater.edu	320.222.5206
Dayna Latham, Training and Outreach Manager, Ridgewater College	Customized Training and Continuing Education	dayna.latham@ridgewater.edu	320.894.5169
Craig Johnson, President, Ridgewater College	Leadership, Administration	craig.johnson@ridgewater.edu	320-222-5202
Jason Duinick, Director of Business Development, Duinick Inc.	Business Development, Legislative	jasond@duinick.com	320.212.9330

As you move further along, identify the key strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats for achieving this goal...

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ridgewater College • Kandiyohi County labor force growing faster than the region • Immigration/New diverse populations • Short-term growth of high school class sizes • Diverse economic landscape 	Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tight labor market (.7 person available for each job vacancy) • Language barriers—comprehension and fluency • Labor market participation rates less than state average for some populations • Skills gap
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrant workforce • Growth of labor force participation rate for some populations • Seniors/Retirees opportunities for additional careers/skills 	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automation, technology and robotics may eliminate some jobs and increase skill sets needed for new jobs • State/National policy decisions • Cultural norms related to Higher Ed/Post-Secondary • Lack of diversity in immigrant careers; lack of aspirations for different careers

Joint Operations Board Meeting

Aaron Backman Report

April 11, 2019

Highway 23 Coalition

On Friday, March 22nd, the Highway 23 Coalition held its Annual Meeting at The 400 Club Restaurant in Rockville, MN. It went very well—over 70 participants attended, members approved a slate of candidates for the Board of Directors, and, in addition to year-end reports, attendees were able to hear from MnDOT Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher, House Transportation Committee Chair Frank Hornstein, and Senate Transportation Committee member Andrew Lang. It was an excellent opportunity to network with MnDOT representatives and elected officials!



MnDOT Commissioner Anderson-Kelliher speaking to the Hwy 23 Coalition.

In other news, the Highway 23 Coalition's Board of Directors held special meeting on April 8th to continue planning for a Coalition trip to Washington, D.C. from June 18th through 20th (The group airfare fare is \$425.88 and the hotel cost is \$686.00). The Coalition Board approved scholarships of up to \$500 per participant for the first five Coalition members in good standing who apply.

Proposed Bethesda New London Campus

Over the past 18 months Bethesda has been considering and planning for a new senior housing project in the New London/Spicer market area. A market study indicated there was sufficient

demand for more senior housing. Bethesda Board of Directors considered various locations and ultimately selected an 11-acre site along Peterson Parkway north of the ACMC Clinic in New London (they have a signed purchase agreement). For the past five months the EDC has been interacting with Bethesda management, Marcus Construction, City of New London, and others regarding the new Bethesda campus, a \$16 million senior and assisted living complex that will feature 36 senior apartments, 18 assisted living units and 18 memory care units. Phase I of the campus would include a town centre with chapel, community areas, dining spaces, a spa, Club Bethesda wellness center, and potentially a child care center. On April 3rd the New London City Council unanimously called for setting a TIF public hearing for the Bethesda project.

15th Street Flats—Construction Update

Construction for 15th Street Flats is on time and on budget. If the schedule continues to hold, the developer anticipates project completion and move-in by late August or September of 2019.



The contractors have been working on the fourth floor of the multi-family apartment complex. On this day (see photo above) there were lots of people working on site in terms of the roof, window and door installation, plumbing, etc. This photo was taken on 4/9/19.

Retail Business Design Workshops

The EDC has engaged partners to create Retail Business Design Workshops that included five merchandising workshops for small retailers in Kandiyohi County. There are nine partners in this

effort—the U of MN Extension, U of MN College of Design, EDC, Ridgewater College, Willmar Mainstreet, Spicer Economic Development, Willmar Area Community Foundation, United Way of West Central MN, and the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce.

On alternating weeks there were coaching sessions for participants to implement and assist one another in applying the information from the workshops (the last session occurred on April 10th). Presenters at the workshops included a former VP of Merchandising for Target; a former Manager with Proctor & Gamble; Director with Bluestem Brands (also known as Fingerhut) and consultant for Best Buy, Target, & Marshall Fields; and Public Relations Manager of Deluxe Corp. These sessions were facilitated by University of MN College of Design and Extension staff. The small retailers were very pleased the sessions (so much so that they would like to continue meeting on a periodic basis as a group and have agreed to meet again on June 5th).

A total of 22 small businesses from the region participated in the workshop/coaching sessions over the 10 weeks. About half the attendees were small retailers from Willmar, 18% were diverse business owners, and about 72% were women-owned businesses. After an application process, four of the business participants were matched with Univ. of MN College of Design students for one-on-one technical assistance (TA). The idea is to implement methods and techniques through the TA that will have a direct impact on those retail businesses. The partners will prepare a final report and will write and distribute a local economic development best practices guide for retail revitalization efforts to be replicated elsewhere.

Business Meetings (March 14th – April 11th)

1. Mtg w/Michelle Haefner (Bethesda), Jim Bach (Marcus), Trudie Guptill (New London), Shannon Sweeney (David Drown Assoc.), Doug Fenstra (Fenstra R.E.) regarding Bethesda New London Campus project
2. Participated in the EDC's Annual Strategic Planning Session at Kandiyohi Power Cooperative headquarters in Spicer (3/14/19)
3. Participated in the interview team process for City of Willmar Planning & Development Director. (Dave Ramstad, the new P&D Director, starts on 4/14/19)
4. Attended Southwest Business Development Network meeting at Lyon County Library
5. Local Housing Trust Fund/MHFA Commissioner Visit Pre-Planning Mtg. (3/20/19)
6. Attended EDC's Ag Committee Meeting w/MN Soybean Growers Presenter
7. Attended Kandiyohi County HRA Strategic Planning/Survey Results Session (3/21/19)
8. Manned booth for shift for Willmar Lakes Area CVB at Northwest Sport Show at Mpls Convention Center (3/23/19)
9. Meeting w/Lindsey Donner re EDC marketing pieces
10. Participated in 2019 West Central Job Fair at Ridgewater College Gym (3/26/19)
11. Participated in Ridgewater College Community Listening Session at Student Center (3/28/19)
12. Attended Pitch Night (3 businesses) at WORKUP



13. Participated in Ridgewater College General Advisory Council at Admin Bldg (3/29/19)
14. Monthly meeting w/Dr. Craig Johnson, Ridgewater College (4/4/19)
15. Attended the Willmar Chamber's Retail in MN: Apocalypse or Epiphany Workshop (4/5/19)
16. Mtg. w/ City of Marshall/Lyon County and Kandiyohi County, Willmar & EDC representatives regarding EDC model (4/8/19)
17. Mtg w/Kevin Friesen, USDA, & Jill Bentson, HRA, re EDC taking over the Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) that is at the HRA (4/9/19)
18. Mtg. w/Victoria Hibma, Lakeland Broadcasting, re marketing

Business Visits

1. Tours of the renovation area for the elevator project at Midtown Plaza with Zack Mahboub
2. Attended CVB Leisure Travel Committee Mtg. at Rosita's Grill in Willmar
3. Participated in New London Food Co-op Membership Meeting at Peace Lutheran in N.L.
4. Meeting w/Myron Krupa re new commercial business near Lakeland Drive



**Joint Operations Board Meeting
Connie Schmoll Report
April 11, 2019**

Childcare

The next meeting of the Rural Child Care Innovation Program is scheduled for Tuesday, April 9, 2019, 3 p.m.

Jessica Beyer, First Children's Finance, is the facilitator of the core leadership team meetings and is committed to a full two years of assistance.

Nine SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound) goals have been created for future focus of tasks. See attached explaining the nine goals.

Willmar Child Care Center has submitted construction plans to the City of Willmar for review. A letter from Carlson Construction has been received stating contractor agreement at the planned price of \$75,000. Southwest Initiative Foundation and Mid-Minnesota Regional Development Commission are awaiting approval by the City of Willmar before closing on their loans.

Broadband

Township Meetings—Broadband Committee members are facilitating discussions with township boards to encourage township level investment and planning for a high-speed broadband deployment project. Both Hiawatha and Arvig have stated they would partner with us to do a buildout, if we have funding partners that cover more than 50% of the project costs. Meetings have been planned or completed with the following township boards:

Green Lake	Mamre
St. Johns	Dovre

The most successful attempts have a willing provider, a committed township, city or county, residents willing to advocate and assist in the planning, and a successful state Border-to-Border grant application.

Meeker County Broadband—Vibrant Broadband, a project of Meeker Cooperative Light and Power (Meeker Co-op), has launched a high-speed broadband project using mixed technology. The project covers the rural areas of Meeker County and a small portion of eastern Kandiyohi County. Scott Froemming, CEO of Kandiyohi Power Cooperative, and I visited with Meeker Co-op CEO, Tim Mergen on Monday, March 25th in Litchfield. Mergen provided a PowerPoint presentation on the planning process, technology to be used and partnerships. The project was planned in conjunction with a fiber deployment already planned for their electrical system throughout the county. Mergen reported that the broadband part of the build still amounts to 80% of the project costs while the electrical portion was 20% of the costs. More details about the project can be found on the Coop's newsletters at www.meeker.coop.

CenturyLink—I received a return call Kirstin Sersland, Director of Local Government Affairs with CenturyLink. They have interest in doing a project with us in one of their Connect America Fund II (CAF) funded areas. They shared a map with me and I am trying to figure out if there is a CAF II area that is currently “unserved” and has township support for which a project could be planned. CenturyLink is working on the same.

Broadband Day on the Hill—Rollie Nissen, Donna Boonstra, Mark Boeschon and I attended Broadband Day on the Hill on April 3rd. The event is sponsored by the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition. Legislators are currently proposing the following:

House Democrats and Senate Republicans released funding targets to their committee chairs this week, signaling a turn towards the final stage of the 2019 Legislative Session. House Democrats are proposing to spend **\$70 million for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program** for the 2020-2021 biennium and the Senate Republicans are proposing to spend **\$30 million in one-time funding**.

Governor Walz released an amended budget proposal at the end of last week. The Governor trimmed \$131 million from his initial proposal, largely due to the February revenue forecast showing a \$1 billion surplus instead of the \$1.5 billion available after the November revenue forecast. Nearly all agencies were subject to reductions in his budget proposal, **but he left the \$70 million recommendation for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program intact**.

The Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition’s priority is \$70 million in ongoing funding for the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant Program! They need our voices to help get the larger amount across the finish line.

A couple of policy bills have been introduced just lately concerning broadband. One of them, authored by Sen. Draheim and supported by Senator Lang and Rep. Baker, removes the word “wireline” from the existing broadband policy, making wireless and fixed wireless projects eligible for funding. This would also affect the mapping, which Baker would like to see. He wants to see how we fare when adding wireless services to the mix. I hope our discussions with both Lang and Baker helped them to see the consequences this could have for securing real broadband that meets our needs for the future. The Rural Alliance Lobbyist, Judy Erickson and Office of Broadband Chair Danna Mackenzie remain confident that this policy will not change and that if it does, projects still need to be scalable to 100/20 in the future and need to prove reliability.

A second policy bill, authored by Sen. Koran, directs the Office of Broadband Development to develop and make publicly available a comprehensive "Broadband How-to Guide" to assist grant applicants and potential grant applicants with broadband best practices, funding options for broadband projects and the broadband grant application process.

One of our speakers was the new Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) **Commissioner Steve Grove**, who spoke about his past work in Silicon Valley with Google and his wife’s work with a Venture Capital Group in Silicon Valley. They currently live in Northfield where they have family roots. Commissioner Grove spoke of a unified voice for broadband at the capitol. He said all legislators appear to be in favor of funds for the Border-to-Border program, but proposed funding levels differ from House to Senate. He sees broadband as “critical to economic development” and confirmed that we have a way to go with our current 2022 goal at 91% and the 2026 goal at 73%. He spoke of the expertise of Danna Mackenzie and the rest of the staff at the Office of Broadband Development.

Commissioner Grove offered points about growing the economy in the state as follows:

1. Broadband is critical;
2. Minnesota innovation collaboration is needed in areas such as grants, research and development, and educational tracts for starting businesses; and

3. Tax credits are one of several things to spur economic development.

House and Senate leadership that joined our group and offered their comments were:

- Senator Erik Simonson
- House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt
- Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka
- HF 7 Author Rep. Rob Ecklund
- HF 7 Author Sen. Mark Koran

Some quotes we heard from speakers and audience responders, and that I may use in my presentations include:

Sen. Koran: “Have a plan for the future, do not plan for being ten years behind.”

“Every elected official needs to get out and speak about the importance of broadband and have this as a top priority.”

Mark Erickson, RS Fiber: after Daudt commented about deficits in some state organizations, “an investment in broadband helps with all of the issues.”

Vince Robinson of the Rural Minnesota Broadband Coalition: “Rural area issues affect metro businesses, broadband is truly a statewide issue.”

Bill Coleman of Community Technology Advisors and advisor for Blandin: “The level of urgency for high-speed broadband is escalating, but waiting for deployment statewide is like waiting for the railroad to come.”

Judy Erickson of the Rural Minnesota Broadband Coalition: “Securing \$30 million one year rather than \$70 for the biennium is a delay of at least one year of progress; a delay that risks losing businesses.”

Our group of four had legislator visits with Senator Andrew Lang and Representative Dave Baker. Mark Boeschen shared the story of a local business with critical broadband issues and a threat to leave our county, maybe even our state.

We shared our concerns for removing the word, “wireline” from the broadband policy and asked for support of funding at the \$70 million level for the biennium.

We tried to eliminate the myths they had about adequate speeds and technology for the rural area and about wireless broadband ability to meet needs for the future.

Sen. Lang stated that a concern for ability for broadband providers to do any more than \$30 million worth of work in the next two years was one of the reasons the Senate reduced their funding bill to just \$30 million. Other community representatives heard the same concern. I later researched this and was told by Jason of Cooperative Network Services (CNS), providers are indeed looking for new projects. They conducted a survey of providers and discovered there are at least \$35 million worth of projects that the providers are collectively willing to take on in the next year.

Our task for the remainder of the legislative session is to continue to advocate for funding in the amount of \$70 million for the next biennium. Stories and messages of support will be best sent to Sen. Torrey Westrom, leader of the Agriculture Committee. Westrom, according to Senate Majority leader Paul Gazelka, is passionate and will fight for better broadband. That is why Gazelka put the broadband funding bill, SF9, into the Ag Committee. Do not hesitate to also share stories of need and personal experience that justifies the full \$35 million with our own legislators, Rep. Dave Baker and Senator Andrew Lang.

Senator Torrey N. Westrom (12, R)
Minnesota Senate Bldg, Room 3201
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-3826
E-mail: sen.torrey.westrom@senate.mn

Business Meetings and Events

1. Childcare core group meeting
2. Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee meeting
3. Retail Business Design Workshops
4. General membership meeting of the Highway 23 Coalition
5. West Central Minnesota Job Fair at Ridgewater College
6. AURI New Uses Forum in St. Louis Park
7. Green Lake Township broadband discussion
8. Highway 23 Coalition Legislative Committee meeting
9. Krista Willis discussion on workforce in agriculture
10. Membership meeting for New London Food Coop
11. Broadband Day on the Hill
12. Partners in Ag Innovation planning
13. Agprofessionals meeting and event planning
14. Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTS) Advisory Board meeting
15. Chamber Retail Workshop

Business Visits

1. Opening Week for Mill Pond Salon
2. Business Expansion, Escape Willmar
3. Planning with plumbing and heating business
4. Willmar Child Care Center
5. Appliance and home center of Willmar

Kandiyohi County Rural Child Care Innovation Program 2019 SMART Goals

Goal One—Streamline Professional Development Opportunities

CORE TEAM LEAD – Chris Stark, Nancy Hafner, Jodi Wambeke, Cindy Salfer and Melissa Schofield

Align and communicate professional development opportunities around early care and education in all settings by September 1st and annually thereafter.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Early childhood professionals will have access to high-quality training opportunities that reflect early childhood best practices. A second result is to effectively collaborate with partner organizations so that practitioners in any setting have access to similar content. All Early Childhood professionals will benefit from high-quality professional development designed to improve overall program quality for children and families.

Goal Two—Increase Network Opportunities for Early Childhood Professionals

CORE TEAM LEAD – Chris Stark, Nancy Hafner, Jodi Wambeke, Cindy Salfer and Melissa Schofield

Over the next six months, explore developing or enhancing early childhood networks of professionals, e.g. family childcare, childcare center directors and staff, early childhood network participants.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Professionals will come together in a safe place with peers, to share ideas and resources. By feeling supported in their work, retention will increase among providers.

Goal Three—Increase Capital Opportunities for Childcare Programs

CORE TEAM LEAD – Connie Schmoll, Don Winkler and Scott Marquardt

Prepare and distribute a helpful childcare business capital informational document for providers entering and wanting to expand their business

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Produce an online PDF document that will be useful to those interested in starting or expanding a childcare business. The document will provide information on capital resources (local, state, federal, foundations, other) and business planning assistance resources. The online resource will also provide general information about steps needed to start a business, including what typical loan documents are needed by funders.

Goal Four—Increase Financial Supports for Childcare Programs

CORE TEAM LEAD – Connie Schmoll, Donn Winkler, Les Nelson and Scott Marquardt

Within 18 months, increase the financial resources so that at least \$20,000 is available in grants and loans to new or expanding childcare centers and childcare home businesses in Kandiyohi County.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Additional resources will help increase the number of new programs to be developed and help retain existing childcare programs in the county.

Goal Five—Identify Non-Owner Occupied Space for Potential Childcare Programs

CORE TEAM LEAD – Connie Schmoll, Donn Winkler, Les Nelson and Scott Marquardt

Identify spaces available in the community to be used by start-up family childcare providers to run their businesses. identify spaces available in faith-based organizations, non-profits or businesses in the

community to be used for new start-up centers or new or existing family childcare programs to run their businesses.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

The expected outcome from this work is the identification of facility arrangements to be used by existing or new, center or family-based childcare providers. This work supports SMART Goal One and the development of new licensed slots for center or family childcare.

Goal Six—Develop Scholarship Opportunities for New and Existing Providers

CORE TEAM LEAD – Patty Dols, Michelle Kromm and Bailey Hauser

In the next six months establish a reverse scholarship program for current and future early childhood graduates that would pay for a portion of their school loans for every year of employment in a childcare setting in Kandiyohi County.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Increased interest and enrollment of new students that go into the field of childcare or to increase their knowledge of child development for their existing business. This would help increase the workforce for childcare within the county.

Goal Seven—Promote Available Resources for Childcare for Families

CORE TEAM LEAD – Sue Thomas

To provide three provider appreciation activities in Kandiyohi County over the next year.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

Ongoing recognition programs will highlight the quality and innovation contributions of childcare programs. The project will raise community awareness and appreciation of the field of early childhood care and education. The project will also provide information to the general public about the quality childcare options in the community.

Goal Eight—Promote Available Resources for Childcare for Families

CORE TEAM LEAD – Sue Thomas

Educate the public about the childcare profession through one media outlet and two community events in 2019.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

SMART Goal Eight will equip parents and the community with better understanding about the field of childcare. A final metric has not been developed yet.

Goal Nine—Promote Available Resources for Childcare for Families

CORE TEAM LEAD – Sue Thomas

Develop a system to support English Language Learners and diverse persons working or desiring to work in the childcare field, to be ready to begin June 30, 2019.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

With the growing diversity in Kandiyohi County this support system will help grow a diverse workforce and create new diverse childcare programs within Kandiyohi County.