

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT POWERS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
MINUTES
April 22, 2021
EDC Board Room, Willmar, MN and Via Zoom Video Conference**

Present: Julie Asmus (via Zoom), George (Corky) Berg, Marv Calvin (via Zoom), Vicki Davis, Steve Gardner and Roland (Rollie) Nissen

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

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

Media: Shelby Lindrud, West Central Tribune (via Zoom)

Chairperson Rollie Nissen called the meeting to order at approximately 11:32 a.m. and declared a quorum was present.

AGENDA—Added to Unfinished Business was add item 3, Willmar Child Care Center.

IT WAS MOVED BY Vicki Davis, SECONDED BY Steve Gardner, to approve the revised Agenda. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Corky Berg, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to approve the Minutes of the January 28, 2021 annual meeting of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Powers Board of Commissioners as e-mailed. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

IT WAS MOVED BY Steve Gardner, SECONDED BY Marv Calvin, to approve the Minutes of the April 8, 2021 special meeting of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Powers Board of Commissioners as e-mailed. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

TREASURER'S REPORT—Aaron Backman stated a 2021 revised budget is provided in the board packets. The main changes are the addition of the Minnesota Pandemic Relief (MPR) Grant program and the purchase of property from Ridgewater College. Backman reviewed the Balance Statement as of March 31, 2021, which shows total liabilities and equity of \$1,006,801.43 and the Profit & Loss Statement as of March 31, 2021, which shows total income of \$875,536.91 and total expenses of \$982,992.97.

IT WAS MOVED BY Steve Gardner, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to file the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission financial reports for periods ending

January 31, February 28 and March 31, 2021, subject to audit. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ridgewater College Surplus Property Acquisition. Backman reported after approval by the EDC boards, closing on the purchase of the surplus property from Ridgewater College was held on February 16, 2021. Backman has been in contact with several developers who are interested in potentially purchasing the property for housing and mixed use development.

Boards' Strategic Planning Session. Backman stated three top priorities were determined at the boards' planning session: 1) broadband; 2) workforce development; and 3) business support. He noted the Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development (Ag) Committee has been ranked the lowest of the EDC's committees over the past few years and some attendees suggested eliminating the committee. Connie Schmoll stated when opportunities arise, the Ag Committee develops subcommittees that work on projects. She suggested the Ag Committee could meet quarterly rather than monthly. Chair Nissen noted the importance of agriculture to the county. Marv Calvin also noted this county has withstood economic downturns because of agriculture and the EDC should not minimize its importance. Backman and Schmoll reviewed the Action Plans (see attached) for the three goal areas noting the coordinators and objectives for each.

Willmar Child Care Center. Backman gave an update on the status of the opening of the Willmar Child Care Center. Backman reported the Finance Committee approved using \$6,500 from the funds remaining in the Immigrant Business Relief Grant Program to pay unpaid invoices incurred by the Willmar Child Care Center, subject to the EDC receiving invoices for the amounts being requested. Backman spoke with Scott Marquardt of Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF), who approved this use of the funds received from SWIF. The amount available is currently just over \$6,000.

IT WAS MOVED BY Julie Asmus, SECONDED BY Steve Gardner, to approve using \$6,000.00 from the Immigrant Business Relief Grant Program for unpaid invoices incurred by the Willmar Child Care Center, subject to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission receiving copies of the invoices that are to be paid. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

NEW BUSINESS

Broadband Planning Agreement. Backman reported a proposal was received from Schmoll to continue working on the broadband project on an independent contractor basis following her retirement from the EDC (see attached). Schmoll noted during the contract she will also train Sarah Swedburg as to the county's broadband issues. Schmoll reviewed the proposed Agreement for Services and Scope of Work.

IT WAS MOVED BY Rollie Nissen, SECONDED BY Corky Berg, to approve the Agreement for Services for Broadband Planning in Kandiyohi County with Connie Schmoll and to approve revising the 2021 budget to add the compensation of \$10,780, which will be taken from unreserved funds. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Corky Berg suggested the number of hours in the Agreement may need to be adjusted in the future. Schmoll noted the Agreement does allow for increased hours, if needed. Schmoll reported she recently met with another township that wants to be included in any future broadband project that is considered.

Revise the Policies and Procedures Manual. Backman provided information on the suggested changes to the Policies and Procedures Manual.

IT WAS MOVED BY Steve Gardner, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to revise the Policies and Procedures Manual by approving the strikeouts and new language as follows:

Section I, General Information, paragraph E, Goals:

1. ~~Five~~ **Two to Three-Year.** ~~Five~~ **Two to three**-year goals shall be established or reviewed at an **annual** planning session of the EDC boards ~~at least every five years.~~ (see Appendix C)

Section IV, Other Policies,

- C. **APPROVAL OF BUDGETED EXPENDITURES.** Budgeted expenditures that do not exceed ~~\$1,000~~ **2,500** accumulative in one month may be paid without prior approval of the board, but a list of these bills paid will be presented to the board at each meeting.

Section V, Programs, add a new paragraph F as follows:

F. MICROENTERPRISE LOAN FUND.

1. **Operation.** The Microenterprise Loan Fund should be operated in accordance with the Manual adopted by the EDC Finance Committee on 11/20/2019 and the Joint Operations Board on 12/12/2019 and ratified by the Joint Powers Board on 1/23/2020 (see Appendix P).
2. **Transfer from Willmar Area Multicultural Business Center.** The EDC Joint Powers Board approved receiving the transfer of the Willmar Area Multicultural Business Center's Microenterprise Loan Fund at its July 26, 2018 meeting and officially received the transfer by a Bill of Sale dated November 2, 2018.

All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Revise the Employee Handbook. Backman noted the Employee Handbook needs to be updated relative to employee health insurance as staff has been paying a portion their health insurance premiums for several years, which is contrary to the language in the handbook.

IT WAS MOVED BY Corky Berg, SECONDED BY Marv Calvin, to revise the Employee Handbook by approving the strikeouts and new language in Section IV, Personnel, paragraph I, Employee Insurance as follows:

1. Employees working 40 hours or more per week shall be provided group medical insurance. The EDC will pay ~~the full~~ **a percentage of the** premium for single coverage for the employee **as determined annually**. An employee may at his/her option purchase additional or dependent coverage through payroll deductions. Temporary full-time employees shall not receive health coverage.

All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

American Rescue Plan. Backman reported \$350 billion was allocated through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for direct aide to states, incorporated cities and townships. The first allocation of funds is expected around May 11, 2021 to states and entitlement cities. Others are expected to receive funds

around June 11, 2021. Backman reported the county expects to receive \$8,380,000 (one-half in 2021 and one-half in 2022) and the city of Willmar expects to receive \$2,260,000. This program allows more time for counties, cities and townships to decide their top priorities for use of the funds. Schmoll has spoken to a number of townships and they may allocate their funds to broadband projects. This is a significant opportunity for Kandiyohi County and Willmar to address projects. Discussion was held on possible uses of the funds. Chair Nissen noted a federal infrastructure bill is pending, but no details are known at this time.

REPORTS

Willmar/Willmar Industrial Park. Backman reported the closing on a housing project between PetSmart and Walmart will be held May 19, 2021. A developer from Stearns County is looking at a multi-family housing project in Block 25 of the Renaissance Zone north of Kwik Trip. The Willmar City Council will hear the proposal on May 3, 2021. Backman is working on a logistics distribution center with CBRE and is hopeful more information will be received this month.

Economic Development Activity. Schmoll reported she is working with several start-up businesses.

[Gardner was excused from the meeting.]

Elevate Business Academy. Schmoll reported the current class is halfway through the program. The program started with nine participants, but four left for a variety of reasons. Abdusalaam Hirsi has been a wonderful leader for the program. The program has been funded by Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) for the first year with a budget of \$28,000. Schmoll reported the EDC purchased a couple of laptops for use by participants. SWIF is also paying all program costs to Rising Tide Capital.

Assistance to Diverse Businesses. Backman reported he met with a Latino family who would like to move into the county. Schmoll is working with another entrepreneur interested in purchasing a building in downtown Willmar and with an Asian woman on a new business.

COMMITTEES—

Ag. Schmoll reported the Ag Committee held a biofuels workshop in March with 26 attendees. The Partners In Ag Innovation Conference will be held July 29, 2021. They have obtained all of the sponsors and the main speaker will discuss what will drive agriculture in the future.

Broadband and Advanced Technology. Schmoll reported discussions continue with Kevin Beyer of Federated Telephone Cooperative. Beyer participated in a discussion with Rep. Dave Baker on the federal grant award to LTD Broadband. Two additional townships have contacted Schmoll in regard to doing a project.

Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment (BRE). Backman noted the BRE Committee is addressing workforce issues and provided an update on Ridgewater College's Commercial Driver's License program.

Finance. Backman acknowledged the Finance Committee’s work in the past year in meeting 27 times relative to the COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Grant Program and 8 times regarding the Minnesota Pandemic Relief Grant program.

Marketing and Public Relations. Backman noted the Marketing and Public Relations Committee will meet this coming Monday. Schmoll will show a video by the Minnesota Marketing Partnership that can be put on the EDC’s website.

Other. Backman thanked Schmoll for her work with the EDC over the past seven years; Schmoll thanked the board for her work with the EDC and Backman for his leadership.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no other business,

IT WAS MOVED BY Julie Asmus, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to adjourn the meeting. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:08 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular board meeting is 11:30 a.m., Thursday, July 22, 2021, at the EDC office.


George (Corky) Berg, Secretary

APPROVED: 7/22/2021:


Rollie Nissen, Chairperson



Kandiyohi County EDC Strategic Planning 2021 Summary Report April 2021

PLANNING PROCESS

The EDC engaged a third-party consultant, Cheryl K. Glaeser with Achieve Consulting, to design a process and facilitate a strategic planning retreat on April 14, 2021. Nearly 30 participants gathered to review and revise goals and strategies that will guide the work of the Commission throughout 2021, recognizing changing demographics and trends impacting the EDC service area. In light of the potential for unforeseen impact from COVID-19 the planning session focused on specific strategies for the next 12-18 months rather than a long-term strategic plan.

SURVEY INSIGHTS

In advance of the planning session, EDC Board members and constituents were asked to complete a survey to gather insights on current goals and economic development trends. Below is a summary of key findings and insights based on 29 survey respondents from various sectors including business, government, economic development, education, and community-based organizations.

87% of respondents were extremely or very satisfied with EDC outcomes achieved in the past 12 months

When asked what the most pressing economic development issues or opportunities may be for the next 12 to 18 months, the following rose to the top:

- Broadband
- Workforce
- Housing
- Child Care
- COVID Recovery (related to business support)



In a similar question, respondents indicated that broadband access (21), housing availability (13), workforce development (12), business recruitment (12), child care availability (9), and business support/financing (9) are most critical to the economic growth of the greater Kandiyohi County area. Other areas receiving more than one vote were community offerings and agricultural innovation.

In an effort to help identify prioritized work for the EDC, survey respondents were then asked to rank specific areas from most essential (1) to least essential (7) when describing the essential work of the EDC over the next 12 to 18 months. While all areas were noted as important, broadband, workforce development and business support, and housing rose to the top.

PRIORITIES

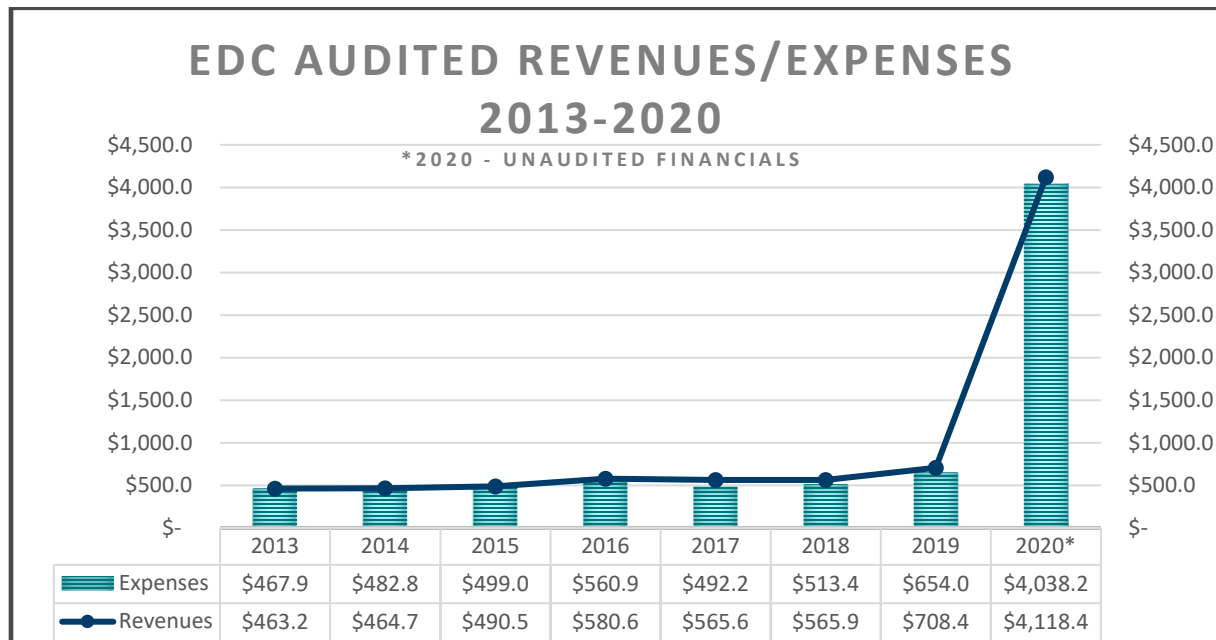
BROADBAND – Many survey comments indicated a strong interest in prioritized efforts to capitalize on current awareness of and availability of resources related to securing broadband services throughout Kandiyohi County. Broadband services were noted as key to providing equitable business and education opportunities. Broadband was further emphasized as a priority during the planning session.

Please rank the items below (from 1 as most essential to 7 as least essential) when describing the essential work of the EDC in the next 12-18 months?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	Score
BROADBAND	31.03%	27.59%	13.79%	3.45%	10.34%	6.90%	6.90%	29	5.17
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	24.14%	17.24%	17.24%	6.90%	20.69%	6.90%	6.90%	29	4.69
BUSINESS SUPPORT	17.24%	24.14%	6.90%	13.79%	20.69%	13.79%	3.45%	29	4.48
HOUSING	17.24%	13.79%	13.79%	20.69%	10.34%	13.79%	10.34%	29	4.24
CHILD CARE	3.45%	10.34%	31.03%	20.69%	10.34%	13.79%	10.34%	29	3.93
AGRICULTURE	6.90%	3.45%	13.79%	10.34%	24.14%	20.69%	20.69%	29	3.14
MARKETING	0.00%	3.45%	3.45%	24.14%	3.45%	24.14%	41.38%	29	2.34
								Answered	29

Reviewing EDC Financials, 2020 Accomplishments and Current Trends

Backman reviewed the EDC financials. The EDC’s assets have seen a 48% increase from \$750,500 in 2016 to \$1,114,900 in 2020, due to the WAMS asset acquisition, new programs and financial management. Since 2016, the EDC has had more revenues than expenditures and has seen an increase in the number of loans provided while loan guarantees have decreased. Currently the EDC has 44 loans and zero loan guarantees. Loan receivables in 2020 were \$355,400 compared to \$75,800 in 2011. Backman reminded participants that the EDC is not judged by the assets we have accumulated but by what we have done with the resources, specifically in technical and financial assistance.



In 2020, the following goal areas were identified as top priorities: **Business Support, Workforce Development, Child Care, and Broadband**. Additional work was undertaken related to Agriculture Innovation, Opportunity/Renaissance Zones, and Housing/Infrastructure. Key accomplishments for these goal areas and other important actions of the EDC throughout 2020 were reviewed and discussed by planning session participants. A full description of these accomplishments can be viewed at <http://kandiyohi.com/your-team/>.

The EDC elevated its business support role and ability to collaborate with Kandiyohi County and other entities throughout 2020 and into 2021 to deploy much-needed resources and support during the pandemic. Over 400 businesses and nonprofits were provided with \$4.5 million in grants and loans through the COBAL, Cares Pandemic Relief and Minnesota Pandemic Relief programs (funded through federal CARES Act dollars and the State of Minnesota.)

Planning session participants noted that the EDC's ability to adapt and respond to business needs during the pandemic. Through the CPR and MPR grant programs, the EDC gained experience and rapport with significantly more businesses in the County.

"Kandiyohi County is better off than most of the region, thanks to the efforts of the EDC."
Planning Session Participant

The EDC worked with **61 different** immigrant business owners in 2020.

Over **85% of the businesses** that received CPR or MPR grants were businesses the EDC had not previously worked with.

Insights and Recommendations for 2021

2021 Priorities – Overarching Goals and Key Strategies

Planning session participants noted that broadband, housing, and childcare form the foundation for strong economic opportunities in the County while business support and workforce development are key to continued growth. The group affirmed that the top priorities for 2021 should be efforts related to broadband, workforce development, and business support. It was noted how intertwined broadband, housing, and childcare are for Kandiyohi County's economic growth and success. As such, housing and childcare will continue to be addressed by the EDC through ongoing involvement in these areas as part of their typical economic development role in the County.

2021 TOP PRIORITIES

- BROADBAND
- WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- BUSINESS SUPPORT

Participants identified the role that marketing and communications plays in each of the 2021 priority areas. While marketing the County as a whole is important, paying specific attention to the priority areas may lead to innovative approaches for messaging about local opportunities.

Participants divided into groups to discuss the strategies that the EDC might use to address these priorities. The strategies and expected outcomes for the goals on the next page can be found at <http://kandiyohi.com/your-team/>.

2021 EDC GOALS (Drafted 4-14-2021)

Broadband: The EDC provides leadership in building coalitions that educate, collaborate, and lobby for improvements in broadband services so that broadband build out happens faster and opportunities increase for Kandiyohi County residents. Goal will be measured by: increased speeds/map percentage; equal access to education, healthcare, and spiritual support; business expansion; and workforce attraction.

Workforce Development: The EDC builds a base of support and helps implement innovative strategies to build a skilled workforce that meets the needs of our local economy. Goal will be measured by the identification of current workforce challenges and best practices; the engagement of students, educators, and businesses in exposure to career opportunities; and the marketing of Kandiyohi County workforce opportunities.

Business Support: The EDC continues to build repour with existing businesses and potential new entrepreneurs by providing awareness of and access to available resources that support business health and growth. Goal will be measured by the numbers of businesses reached and supported through EDC and other available resources.

Additional Work: The EDC will continue to support specific initiatives in the County that lead to economic growth. This includes supporting child care efforts, housing development projects, growth in Opportunity and Renaissance Zones, and agricultural innovation opportunities.

Consultant Reflections

The Kandiyohi County Economic Development Commission, its staff, Board, and committee members hold pride in the ability of the EDC to respond and react quickly to support businesses in their time of need throughout the past year. Their efforts expanded the awareness of the EDC's services which may lead to heightened use their services in the coming year. To aide staff capacity and the ability to focus on key goals, the EDC may benefit from changes to the current committee structure. Staff may still participate in ongoing committees but would not take a lead role in coordinating additional meetings. You may also consider adding staff capacity in marketing/communications to gain messaging insights from the various committees that the EDC has traditionally participated in. One approach to committee structure might be as follows:

BUSINESS FINANCE & ENTREPRENEURSHIP (Combine portion of BR&E and Finance Committees)– This committee would focus on providing leadership to the financing and technical assistance services the EDC provides to existing businesses, emerging entrepreneurs, and efforts to attract new businesses.

BUSINESS SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE (Replace Broadband) This committee would focus on foundational issues and opportunities such as broadband, child care, housing, and infrastructure. The focus may change as project needs change within the County, addressing what emerges as most needed for economic growth. For the next 12 months a key focus would be broadband.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT – (Branches off from BR&E) This committee would focus on efforts to attract and retain the people and jobs needed to support the local economy. In light of expected labor force decline from 2020 to 2030 and the extremely tight labor market currently, this is an area that may need more focused attention over the next few years.

DRAFT - EDC Action Planning - BROADBAND
UPDATED 5/03/21



Priority Area	Broadband
Priority Summary	Educate, collaborate and lobby to secure future-proof broadband services throughout Kandiyohi County
Project Coordinator: (A person of interest/ champion to help EDC Staff)	Connie Schmoll, Independent Contractor for Broadband Assistance
Phone/Email:	320-522-1805 Connie@kandiyohi.com

Strategic Priority (Stated as a goal with measurable results, not just effort)	EDC provides leadership in building coalitions that educate, collaborate, and lobby for improvements in broadband services so that broadband build out happens faster and opportunities increase 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. Educate: Supply elected officials with talking points that reflect the needs/stories of businesses and citizens of the County (gathered through listening sessions, testimonial letters and community conversations)	Committee members, educational materials
	2. Collaborate to gain buy-in from residents, providers, and financial supporters and to take advantage of funding opportunities that are available. Use the 4-township project as a springboard.	Committee members, local government leaders, educational materials
	3. Lobby for broadband resources working with local townships, cities, county, and state representatives. Support statewide lobbying efforts that enhance policies for broadband expansion.	Marketing Committee, MN Governor’s Taskforce for Broadband Development, MN Rural Broadband Coalition
Expected Outcomes: The impact we seek: What will be different as a result of our efforts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed maps reflect 50% of Kandiyohi County at 100 mbps down and 20 mbps up in 2 years /100% in 5 years • Equal access to educational opportunities • Equal access to healthcare • Businesses expand and are able to attract the needed workforce • The spiritual needs of the community members can be met remotely • Increased property values due to broadband access • Broadband is accessible to all just as is electric services 	

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

NAME	Skills/Resources	Email	Phone
Connie Schmoll	Contracted services to lead efforts	connie@kandiyohi.com	320-522-1805
Mark Boesch	Committee Chair	mark@firebytes.com	320-212-3125
Michelle Marotzke	Committee Vice-chair	Michelle.marotzke@mrrdc.org	320-287-1737
David Sisser	Committee Member	daves@wccwireless.com	320-235-0811
Dean Bouta	Committee Member	dbouta@bennettoffice.com	320-222-6103
Donna Boonstra	Committee Member	Donnaboo47@msn.com	320-295-3134
Kevin Beyer	Broadband Provider	Kevin.beyer@aciracoop.net	320-287-1490

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment of Broadband Committee members • Skilled/experienced provider • Citizens' interest and demand • New awareness of need due to pandemic 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time/deployment cost constraints • Provider competition • Many personalities and agendas • Some people already receiving adequate service for current usage • Population density • Topography
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadband Committee • Border to border grants • Provider interest • Working with unserved and underserved • Education in the community 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law/current language • Inaccurate maps • Federal funding allows sub-standard projects • Incumbent telco's

OTHER NOTES:

- People are moving to where broadband is to commute to work
- Broadband supports farmers, workforce development, and computer literacy
- Important to reach out to community – listening sessions/community conversations
- It will take approximately \$60,000,000 to deploy fiber throughout County
- Focus on rural and service in cities will increase also because the market will force it
- We must change the speed maps for Kandiyohi County!
- Need to act now; don't wait for new technology
- Imperative to get the real story out about speeds/access

EDC Workforce Development Action Plan

Updated 4/13/2021 (Blue areas are from 2020 Plan)



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 Coordinators: (A person of interest/ champion to help EDC Staff)	Sam Bowen, Dean of Customized Training, Ridgewater College Aaron Backman, Executive Director, EDC
Phone/Email:	320-905-2269 (Sam); 320-235-7370 (Aaron)

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. Research and development of data that identifies best practices for workforce training and determines Kandiyohi County’s workforce advantages/disadvantages.	EDC Staff, Committee
	2. Build an Employment/Workforce Resource webpage that showcases workforce advantages in Kandiyohi County such as cost of living, and other data discovered through above research.	Marketing Committee; REDstar or other
	3. Expose 200 High School students to different businesses (e.g. DI Labs, West Central Steel, etc.)	Willmar H.S., Committee, Local businesses
	4. Hold a Workforce Summit with workforce partners and businesses to explore best practices, identify true workforce challenges, and work together on solutions.	Nova-Tech Eng.?, CMJTS & workforce partners, W.D. Committee
OTHER NOTES	Insights from planning session (some may become tasks under the above objectives) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attraction: Who do we attract? What attracts them? What/who makes up the 9% of population growth over the past 20 years? • Attraction: activity for young people; infrastructure support; transfer of degrees from other countries • Marketing: tell the story of the opportunity for people to live here; highlight business opportunities and online education options; promote the County as place for external businesses to find remote employees; build strategies that attract target markets (i.e. younger people) • Capitalize on stable economics of Willmar region • Develop an identity/brand for Kandiyohi County • Increase partnerships between business & education (of all levels) • Distribute MMP info on www.JoinUsMN.com to site selectors 	

<p>Expected Outcomes:</p> <p>The impact we seek: What will be different as a result of our efforts?</p>	<p>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.</p> <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 careers with greater earning potential • Helping to fulfill local job market needs
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Who are the people who may be interested in supporting/working together on this goal?

NAME	Skills/Resources	Email	Phone
Craig Johnson, Pres-Ridgewater	Higher Ed	Craig.johnson@ridgewater.edu	320.222.5202
Sam Bowen – Ridgewater	Higher Ed	sam.bowen@ridgewater.edu	320.222.5206
Dayna Latham – Ridgewater	Higher Ed	dayna.latham@ridgewater.edu	320.894.5169
Jennifer Mendoza – CLUES	Adult Training /Diverse	jmendoza@clues.org	320-455-5465
Jason Duinck – Duinck Inc.	Funding	jasond@duinck.com	320.212.9330
Bridget Paulson, CMJTS	Adult Training	bpaulson@cmjts.org	320-290-7685

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

<p>Strengths</p> <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 HS class sizes • Diverse economic landscape 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to work post-pandemic • Language barriers – comprehension and fluency • Labor market participation rates less than state average for some populations • Skills gap
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrant workforce • Growth of labor force participation rate for some populations • Seniors/Retirees opportunities for additional careers/skills • ARP funding for small businesses due to COVID-19 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automation, technology and robotics may eliminate some jobs and increase skills 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

EDC Business Support Action Plan

BUSINESS SUPPORT (Retention/Recruitment/Expansion)



Priority Area	Business Support (Retention/Recruitment/Expansion)
Priority Summary	Supporting existing businesses and new business opportunities by providing awareness of and offering the EDC's services.
Project Coordinator: (A person of interest/ champion to help EDC Staff)	Aaron Backman, Executive Director, EDC Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager, EDC; Other??
Phone/Email:	320-235-7370

Strategic Priority (Stated as a goal with measurable results, not just effort)	<i>The EDC continues to build rapport with existing businesses and potential new entrepreneurs by providing awareness of and access to available resources that support business health and growth.</i>	
Mission Connection (How this goal aligns with the mission of the EDC)	EDC catalyzes economic growth by supporting existing businesses and reaching out to new entrepreneurs 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. Continue building rapport with businesses who received support via CPR/MPR programs through one-on-one visits and streamlined assistance for challenges post-COVID	EDC Staff; Committee
	2. Continue focused support for emerging entrepreneurs and diverse businesses through technical assistance and programs such as Elevate Academy for those wanting to start a business or operate an existing business	Scott Marquardt, SWIF; Salaam Hirsi, Elevate; Rising Tide Capital; EDC Staff; SWIF; Community Integration Ctr.
	3. Encourage business growth, expansion, and attraction opportunities utilizing Opportunity/Renaissance zones	EDC Staff; Committee
	4. Research the lifecycles of businesses and the ways in which they might provide opportunities in new areas.	EDC Staff
Expected Outcomes: The impact we seek: What will be different as a result of our efforts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses owners that are able to streamline challenges they may have and learn from each other's successes and challenges. • Our communities know and understand how the EDC can help businesses. • Entrepreneurs that are prepared for successful business start-ups. 	

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
Art Benson	Joint Ops Board	art@soundimagewillmar.com	320-220-1513
Abdullahi Awale	Joint Ops Board	Awale11@icloud.com	320-493-7032
Abdirahin Hussen	African Dev. Center	ahussen@adcmnnesota.org	612-481-4577
Fowzi Ismail	C.I.C.	communityintegrationcentre@gmail.com	612-817-7238

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDC Marketing Committee • EDC Staff • Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) • Mid-Minnesota Development Commission (MMDC) • Rising Tide Capital Curriculum 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many businesses are not aware of what the EDC has to offer • Amount of businesses to reach
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break down barriers with other groups • Programs like SCORE, One Million Cups • Mentoring/coaching arrangements • Elevate Academy for entrepreneurs 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate time/capacity • Pandemic continues to affect sales for certain businesses (e.g. hotels)

OTHER NOTES:

- There are intertwined needs between Workforce Development, Childcare, Housing, and Business Support.
- How might COVID impacts continue to be a challenge for some of our businesses?
- Might we attract new entrepreneurs/businesses through creative structures, downtown renovation?
- Might we help existing businesses grow by looking at new/renovated locations within communities (Willmar - opportunity/renaissance zones)?

April 1, 2021

Aaron Backman, Executive Director
Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC
222 20th Street SE
Willmar, MN 56201

Dear Aaron and the EDC Board of Directors,

I am submitting to you a proposal for you to consider entering into a contract for my assistance with broadband for Kandiyohi County after my employment with the EDC has terminated.

Broadband has been a critical issue and focus of the EDC for many years. In 2017, when the EDC and Consolidated Telecommunications Company (CTC) worked together to plan a \$10 million broadband deployment project and secured \$5 million in state broadband matching funds to finance the project, we thought we were off to a great start. We were devastated when CTC pulled out of the project, especially since we had worked extremely hard to secure all of the 50% commitments and nearly all of the \$25 deposits required by CTC to accept the grant funds and commence construction on the project.

The EDC's Broadband Committee members and EDC staff may have been knocked down, but not forever. We are back at it and it looks as though the EDC, along with Federated Telephone Company, a communication cooperative, will have a proposal and a competitive grant application to submit to the state Office of Broadband Development in 2021. Working with Federated has been a breath of fresh air. They have a great deal of experience with such projects, having deployed fiber broadband in the rural areas of several counties including Lac Qui Parle, Big Stone, and Swift. Federated deployment measures line up nicely with the goals of the EDC's Broadband Committee goals to deploy only fiber, the gold standard in broadband technologies.

With more than 5 years of experience and the building of many relationships critical to advancement in broadband, I would like to continue to assist the EDC and Kandiyohi County in securing high-speed broadband for all residents and businesses in the county. The language and issues around broadband are complicated. It took me many years to understand enough to be an advocate for the county. The grant writing process is time consuming and requires collaboration with many partners. I have the experience needed to write a competitive broadband grant.

The project with Federated is well underway but there is quite a bit of work yet to do with the four townships involved. The township supervisors are counting on me to help them define the project area and facilitate their joint efforts to secure the project. I have been assisting them in finding legal and accounting assistance for the project. They have asked for my continued facilitation to create service agreements, market the project to constituents, secure signatures on constituent petitions, bond for funds to pay the township portion of the deployment costs, and decide on how they will assess property owners to pay back the bonds.

In addition, broadband projects have been discussed with other providers such as Hanson Communications Company of Clara City and Vibrant Broadband, a business under the umbrella of Meeker Power & Light in Litchfield. If both move forward on projects, Kandiyohi County will see high-speed broadband deployment in several portions of the county, including the west side, Arctander, Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns Townships, on the east, adjacent to Vibrant Broadband builds, possibly Roseville and Irving Townships or Roseville and Burbank Townships, and in the southwest by Hanson Communications in either Holland and Edwards or Holland and Roseland Townships.

I request that you give my attached proposal your consideration. This assistance can be a great help in allowing the new Business Development Manager be successful in the many roles to fill at the EDC while the agency continues the current momentum for successful broadband deployment in Kandiyohi County. I am willing to begin the contract work by June 1, 2021.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Connie Schmall".

Connie Schmall
Independent Contractor

Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission
AGREEMENT FOR SERVICES for
Broadband Planning in Kandiyohi County
June 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021

THIS AGREEMENT is made and entered into this ___ day of April, 2021 between Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (hereafter EDC), P.O. Box 1783, Willmar, MN 56201 and Constance J. Schmoll (hereafter Contractor), 7001 12th Street NW, Willmar, MN 56201. EDC and Contractor agree to the following terms and conditions:

- A. Duties, Terms and Services: Subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement, EDC hereby engages Contractor to perform the services set forth herein for the EDC’s Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee and for broadband planning and outreach activities in Kandiyohi County (hereafter “the Project”), and Contractor hereby accepts such engagement.

Under this Agreement, Contractor will provide the services as described in the Scope of Work (attached as Exhibit A) which outlines key work pertaining to the Project including, but not limited to, project planning, coordination of efforts, grant writing, marketing, outreach to businesses and nonprofits, technical assistance and reporting documentation with the Project. The Project scope of work may be modified through electronic and/or written agreement by EDC and Contractor.

This Agreement shall commence on June 1, 2021 and be completed on or before December 31, 2021. Services will be provided as agreed upon and generally described in the Scope of Work (attached as Exhibit A).

- B. Written Reports and Materials: The contract will require that all written documentation compiled within the scope of work be provided on or before February 1, 2022. All documents prepared by Contractor in connection with services rendered under this Agreement, are and shall remain the exclusive property of EDC.
- C. Compensation: EDC agrees to pay Contractor a fee of up to \$9,880 (approximately 152 hours) at a rate of \$65/hour for each hour completed toward the Project. In addition, Contractor may request reimbursement of up to \$800 for travel/mileage and \$100 for supplies and materials. The total compensation shall not exceed \$10,780 unless all parties agree to additional compensation, in writing, within the timeframe of this contract. The EDC or Contractor may request additional compensation should the scope of work be expanded and associated costs be agreed upon by all parties.
- D. Billing/Payments: Contractor shall submit an invoice one time per month beginning on June 30, 2021. A final invoice covering remaining costs shall be submitted by Contractor within 15 days of the contract end date of December 31, 2021. Compensation shall be payable by EDC within 15 days of receipt of the Contractor’s invoices. Contractor shall bill and EDC shall reimburse the Contractor for all reasonable expenses that are incurred in connection with the performance of duties. All expenses must be submitted with receipts for specific itemized expenses.
- E. Use of Personal Automobile: Contractor will be reimbursed for mileage at the rate established by the Internal Revenue Service (currently .56 cents/mile) when using her own automobile for travel on authorized activity related to contract completion. Transportation expenses between Contractor’s home and the EDC shall be considered personal commuting expenses and not reimbursable under this

agreement. Transportation expense for planning meetings from Contractor's home or from the EDC office shall be reimbursed. The maximum reimbursement for mileage must fall within the compensation limit noted in paragraph C. Contractor shall carry, at her own expense, the minimum insurance coverage for property damage and public liability relating to the operation of her personal vehicle.

- F. Liability and Indemnification: Contractor represents that the services to be provided under this Agreement are reasonable in scope and she has the experience and ability to provide the services. Contractor agrees to indemnify and hold harmless EDC against all claims, suits or judgments made or recovered by any and all persons which are the result of acts or omissions of Contractor, Contractor's agents or employees during performance of services under this Agreement.
- G. Confidentiality: Contractor acknowledges that during the engagement she may have access to and become acquainted with information about the Project and EDC. Contractor agrees she will not disclose any information, directly or indirectly, about the Project or EDC, either during the term of this Agreement or at any other time thereafter, except as required in the course of this engagement or with the approval of EDC. All files, records, documents, letters, notes and similar items relating to the Project, whether prepared by Contractor or otherwise coming into her possession, shall remain the exclusive property of EDC.
- H. Termination: Either party may terminate this Agreement by giving 30 days prior written notice to the other. In the event of any such termination, Contractor shall be compensated for professional fees and expenses incurred with respect to services performed through the effective date of termination, but will not be entitled to any additional compensation. In addition, if Contractor is convicted of any crime or offense, fails or refuses to comply with written policies or reasonable directive of EDC, is guilty of serious misconduct in connection with performance, or materially breaches provisions of this Agreement, EDC at any time may terminate the engagement of Contractor immediately and without prior written notice to Contractor.
- I. Independent Contractor: This Agreement shall not render Contractor an employee of EDC. Contractor is and will remain an independent contractor in her relationship to EDC. EDC shall not be responsible for withholding taxes with respect to Contractor's compensation hereunder. Contractor shall have no claim against EDC hereunder or otherwise for vacation pay, sick leave, retirement benefits, social security, worker's compensation, health or disability benefits, unemployment insurance benefits or employee benefits of any kind.
- J. EDC Non-Discrimination Policy: Contractor shall adhere to EDC's non-discrimination policy. The policy states EDC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, age or religion in its employment, or the provision of programs and services.

KANDIYOHI COUNTY & CITY OF WILLMAR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

By: _____

Aaron Backman
Executive Director

Date: April _____, 2021

Constance J. Schmoll
Independent Contractor

Date: April _____, 2021

Exhibit A
Scope of Work for Contracted
Broadband Planning and Deployment Assistance in Kandiyohi County

The following outline proposes tasks and the proposed estimated timeframe for the contract. This outline should be considered a starting point for discussion about the preferred process and timeframe to best meet the desired outcome of this project. The full scope of work will be determined by several factors, including:

1. Final decisions made by potential broadband service providers and Kandiyohi County/Township leaders who choose to move forward with broadband planning and potential project implementation.
2. Funds allocated for broadband deployment during the 2021 State of Minnesota Legislative Session and other possible funding sources.
3. Direction provided by EDC for advancing the current deployment project and beginning or continuing future projects.

JUNE 2021—40 hours

- Work with Federated Telephone Cooperative to finalize broadband deployment plans, including determining number of residential sites, businesses, anchor institutions and other potential consumers of broadband in the proposed project area and market the project to constituents to determine commitment. The current proposed project area includes the townships of Arctander, Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns.
- Coordinate work of the EDC Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee to inform and educate township constituents and promote signing of a petition asking the township supervisors to invest in the project.
- Coordinate planning sessions with representatives of Arctander, Dovre, Mamre and St. Johns Townships in their current pursuit of a broadband deployment project with Federated Telephone Cooperative. Decisions will need to be made about bonding, assessing constituents, creating a subordinated service district, service agreements with the broadband providers and paying for or bonding to secure funds to pay for the project.
- Continue to seek funding from various sources, in addition to county funds and township resources and bonding, to bring the cost down for individuals and businesses in the project area. Additional funds may come from Kandiyohi County from American Rescue Plan Act funds and businesses in the project area or that serve the project area.
- Continue discussions with Hanson Communications and Vibrant Broadband on additional broadband projects in the rural areas of Kandiyohi County. Broadband deployment is an eligible expense for use of American Rescue Plan Act funds and the timeframe for that use aligns with broadband deployment projects that can be planned during the year 2021 and finished by December 2023.
- Provide continued communication with providers, EDC, the EDC Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee, townships and Kandiyohi County.

July 2021—36 hours

- Continue tasks as in June according to need.
- Secure letters of support for the broadband projects to be submitted with the Minnesota Border-to-Border Broadband Development Grant application. Letters are needed from constituents, as well as those serving the people in the project area (schools, healthcare, parks, farm services, technology and more).
- Prepare a competitive grant application, in conjunction with Federated Telephone Cooperative, to be submitted by late August or early September 2021 to meet the state grant application deadline.

August 2021—36 hours

- Continue securing letters of support, refinement of the competitive grant application, and coordination of planning with providers, EDC, the EDC Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee, townships, Kandiyohi County and other funders.
- Provide assistance to Federated Telephone Cooperative to submit the state grant application and remain in contact with the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development to provide additional information and materials as requested.

September–December 2021—40 hours

- Remain in contact with the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development to provide additional information and materials as requested.
- Further pursue future projects with township leaders and constituents and with potential broadband providers and start the planning process with interested parties.
- Provide continued communication with providers, EDC, the EDC Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee, townships and Kandiyohi County.
- Spend time coaching and training the EDC's Business Development Manager in the area of broadband development.

Suggested changes to the EDC's Policies and Procedures Manual:

**I.
GENERAL INFORMATION**

E. GOALS.

1. **Five-Two to Three-Year.** ~~Five~~Two to three-year goals shall be established or reviewed at an **annual** planning session of the EDC boards ~~at least every five years.~~ (see Appendix C)
2. **Annual.** Annual goals shall be established at a planning session each calendar year. (see Appendix D)

**IV.
OTHER POLICIES**

C. **APPROVAL OF BUDGETED EXPENDITURES.** Budgeted expenditures that do not exceed \$~~1,000~~**2,500** accumulative in one month may be paid without prior approval of the board, but a list of these bills paid will be presented to the board at each meeting.

**V.
PROGRAMS**

F. MICROENTERPRISE LOAN FUND.

1. **Operation.** The Microenterprise Loan Fund should be operated in accordance with the Manual adopted by the EDC Finance Committee on 11/20/2019 and the Joint Operations Board on 12/12/2019 and ratified by the Joint Powers Board on 1/23/2020 (see Appendix P).
2. **Transfer from Willmar Area Multicultural Business Center.** The EDC Joint Powers Board approved receiving the transfer of the Willmar Area Multicultural Business Center's Microenterprise Loan Fund at its July 26, 2018 meeting and officially received the transfer by a Bill of Sale dated November 2, 2018.

Suggested changes to the Employee Handbook:

**IV.
PERSONNEL**

I. EMPLOYEE INSURANCE.

1. Employees working 40 hours or more per week shall be provided group medical insurance. The EDC will pay ~~the full~~ a **percentage of the** premium for single coverage for the employee **as determined annually**. An employee may at his/her option purchase additional or dependent coverage through payroll deductions. Temporary full-time employees shall not receive health coverage.