



## 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**

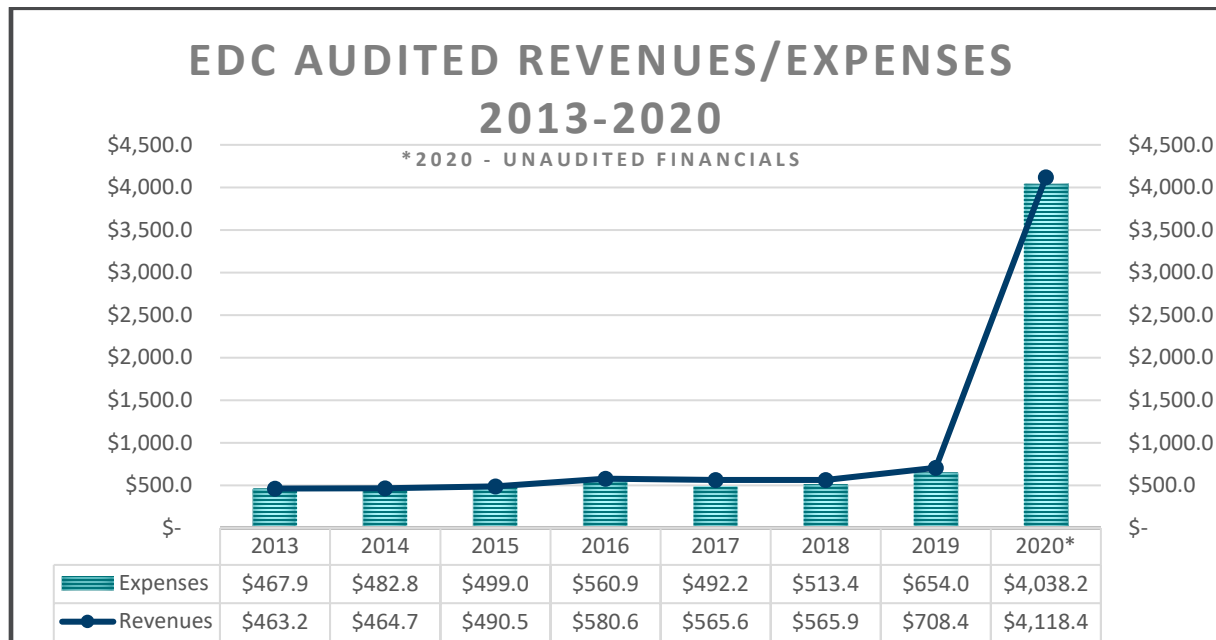
**BROADBAND** – Many survey comments indicated a strong interest in prioritized efforts to capitalize on current awareness of and availability of resources related to securing broadband services throughout Kandiyohi County. Broadband services were noted as key to providing equitable business and education 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/>.

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

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.)

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.

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.

## 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.