

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
April 25, 2016
WORKUP, Willmar

Present: Shari Courtney, Sarah Isdal, Ann Winge Johnson, Heather Koffler, Mike Negen and Julie Redepenning

Excused: Donna Boonstra and Jean Geselius

Absent: Caroline Chan and Lindsey Donner

Guests: Char Ammermann, Char Media; Tyler Gehrking, Facilitator, Kandiyohi County Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities (KCEO) Program; Emily Lien, Digital Media Specialist, Heritage Bank, N.A.; Chloe Halvorson, Four Eyes Marketing & Communications; and Jayme Sczublewski, WORKUP

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director

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

Heather Koffler called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m. followed by self introductions.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Ann Winge Johnson, SECONDED BY Sarah Isdal, to approve the minutes of the March 28, 2016 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

CEO Program. Backman explained the KCEO Program, which is modeled after an Illinois program and encourages student entrepreneurs to start their own businesses. Last week, the EDC approved 19 loans to students in the KCEO Program. Backman noted the EDC is a founding member of WORKUP and has two transferable membership passes for which he selected two KCEO students, Char Ammermann and Chloe Halvorson to utilize those passes. Willmar is one of six cities in Greater Minnesota that offer co-working space. Ammermann and Halvorson provided information on their start-up businesses.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2016 Marketing Plan. Last month the committee discussed doing two digital newsletters and two printed newsletters and alternating the versions to reduce marketing costs. Backman wanted to wait on doing the Chamber ADvantage until after the EDC boards' April 21, 2016 planning session. He will decide in the next two weeks whether to do the ADvantage or not. Last month, it was also discussed to do a mailing to Chamber members separate from the ADvantage. Julie Redepenning

offered to include the EDC's newsletter in her mailing or online newsletter, which is very brief and has many links. The committee discussed how to measure the effectiveness of the Chamber mailing against a digital newsletter.

Update Industry Specific/Targeted Industry Brochures. Backman suggested featuring the MinnWest Technology Campus (MWTC) in a brochure and showed an example from Joanna Schrupp (see attached). Backman noted what sells MWTC are some of its infrastructure, including broadband, the MinnWest Commons and cafeteria and proximity to other technology-related businesses. Backman would like three to four different brochures available for when he meets with prospects and would like information tailored to manufacturing, MWTC and the Willmar Industrial Park once it is certified shovel-ready. Betsy Bonnema suggested creating a prospect checklist and if there are five or more needs, a brochure should be done. Bonnema showed a sample presentation used by Jean Spaulding to target a specific business. Bonnema could create a similar presentation that could be modified according to use with some areas being the same, such as the opening paragraph. Ann Winge Johnson noted new marketing tools she has seen are flash drives on which presentations are saved or videos.

NEW BUSINESS

WORKUP. Bonnema stated she is trying to provide a way for the EDC to market what it does and develop various events at WORKUP, such as QUP and MEETUP showing the EDC as a sponsor. Bonnema is now trying to develop a Startup Builder Membership (see attached) for new businesses to possibly include classes covering a marketing plan, business plan, etc. Bonnema recently held a group marketing startup series of 1½ to 2 hour sessions over six weeks with each company coming away with a mini-marketing plan. Bonnema would like to look at doing the same thing for business plans with the classes being held in early mornings and evenings to accommodate entrepreneurs who are working.

[Julie Redepenning was excused from the meeting.]

Bonnema does not want to duplicate what is already being done by Southwest Initiative Foundation and the Small Business Development Center, but wants to facilitate comraderie between businesses and collaboration. Bonnema asked for ideas on how to build the courses, make them convenient, bring in partners, connect people and bring in experts for different areas of a business plan. A QuickBooks basics class was mentioned, as well as offering a package to attend several classes. Bonnema noted Southwest Initiative Foundation's CORE program is online and not done as a group. A suggestion was made to maybe add a component on speaking in front of groups.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:07 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is 12 noon, Monday, May 23, 2016 at WORKUP, 1601 Technology Drive NE, Willmar.



where innovation meets collaboration



A Business Community With An Innovative Culture

The MinnWest Technology Campus is a business community located on a 100 acre historic campus in the heart of Minnesota lakes country. We are currently home to over 30 companies who create a rich network of talent and expertise in the areas of **agribusiness**, **bioscience** and **technology**. Among them are national and global leaders in their industries.

At the MinnWest Technology Campus, we're building a culture where **innovation** meets **collaboration**.



Won't you join us? Start, grow or relocate your business here.

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EDC FOUNDING MEMBERSHIP



WORKUP is a coworking facility started in May of 2015 on the MinnWest Technology Campus in Willmar, Minnesota. Coworking provides shared office space and creates an ecosystem and support network for entrepreneurs, freelancers, consultants and small business owners. The coworking movement nurtures a culture of collaboration, connection and continued learning among its membership and community.

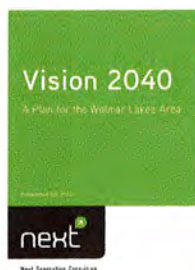
Coworking is escalating quickly around the world as a strategic driver of economic development opportunities. That's because by 2020, more than 40% of the US workforce is expected to be independent workers and entrepreneurs.

The Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar EDC is a founding member of WORKUP and a valuable partner in our monthly entrepreneurial programming. While other economic development organizations have undertaken full management of coworking spaces (ex. Launchpad in Bemidji, MN), our EDC has instead chosen to support WORKUP's efforts in the private sector as a more cost-effective and resource-efficient approach to capturing the economic development advantages of coworking for our community.



WORKUP has hosted the Social Breakfast several times.

EXCERPT FROM WILLMAR'S VISION 2040 REPORT



Goal Two: Strengthen the region's occupational diversity through a strategic mix of workforce training, economic measurement, enhanced career options, and support for entrepreneurs.

2.2.1: Create a coworking space for the region's entrepreneurs, creative class, and free agents.

OUR FOUNDING MEMBERS





Several state legislators visited Willmar and WORKUP to learn more about coworking and our highly successful KCEO program.

EDC FOUNDING MEMBERSHIP

WORKUP was launched with the support of a small group of Founding Members. The EDC's Founding Membership has been central to our success in building community awareness, membership and valuable programming for startups and small business.

COST: \$450/mo or \$5,400/yr

BENEFITS:

- **Connected and contributing to** an ecosystem of support for entrepreneurs and small business, driving economic development opportunities for our community.
- **Recognized as key Founding Member** in WORKUP marketing, events and public relations.
- **Recognized for helping to bring coworking to Willmar, thereby establishing a cutting edge reputation for our region** as a hub of collaboration and entrepreneurial success.
- **Recognized as provider of free monthly programming** available to WORKUP members and the community at large.
To date, EDC has helped to hold:
 - **8 QUP sessions** - Subject matter experts teaching and facilitating roundtable discussion on topics such as branding, marketing, startup financing, business valuation, social media and digital tools for collaboration.
 - **8 MEETUP sessions** - Area entrepreneurs sharing their stories and facilitating roundtable discussion about the challenges small business owners face and strategies needed to succeed.
- **Two transferable membership passes** that can be used by EDC staff or shared with anyone of your choosing. Passes provide 24/7 access to WORKUP and full amenities.



WORKUP actively supports KCEO by offering classroom space, mentoring and scholarships.

"COWORKING PROVIDES A HAVEN FOR RURAL ENTREPRENEURS,"

SHAREABLE:

"The entrepreneurial spirit is strong in rural communities, and

coworking gives these fearless business owners the opportunity to come out of their basements and garages, and into the public eye.



WORKUP has a diverse membership.

'Coworking can energize small cities/rural economies by creating opportunities for businesses and people, and creating jobs,' said Jessica Hill, a human services professional currently building a coworking community in New London, Connecticut (pop. 27,610). 'People, especially business want to feel supported. If you feel supported and connected, you are more likely to stay where you live.'

'Rural communities are innovative, creative places,' said Kidd. 'Many rural economies have limited access to resources or capital for growth, so a model like coworking is so useful because it helps address the lack of infrastructure and lets rural innovators and entrepreneurs get to work.'

Read more at <http://www.shareable.net/blog/coworking-provides-a-haven-for-rural-entrepreneurs>

WORK UP
coworking meeting collaborating



WORKUP hosts a variety of events for members. Pictured is a live focus group for Ridgewater College.

WORKUP FIRST YEAR SUCCESS

Coworking is a new concept to our community, so we've invested considerable time and resources exposing people to our facility and culture. It's working, and our membership and programming is growing.

CURRENT MEMBERS: We currently have 26 members. 7 of those members are businesses or organizations with multiple, transferable passes and access to our meeting space.

TARGETED GROWTH: In the next 6 months, we hope to add 8 full time equivalent members. We estimate our capacity at up to 50 members, depending on their type of membership and use of the space.

EVENTS: Since we opened, we've hosted over 25 different events in our space or on campus which were open to WORKUP members and the community at large. Most were free of cost. The EDC was and continues to be visible as a supporter in the first 5 in this list:

- Monthly QUP
- Monthly MEETUP
- Hack₂O (Hackathon for digital development)
- Taste of WORKUP
- TEDxWillmarLive
- Design Thinking Workshop
- Blogging Workshop
- Social Media Breakfast
- Yoga Classes

COLLABORATORS: Along with our Founding Members, WORKUP has been actively supporting and collaborating with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber, Southwest Initiative Foundation, Vision 2040, neXt and the KCEO program.



Our monthly MEETUP invites local entrepreneurs to share their story.



WORKUP's goal is to give Founding Members visibility during our events and within core marketing materials.



This group represents the three local start-ups who participated in our recent Marketing Startup Series.

PROJECTS ON THE HORIZON

We are currently working on an "incubator" style experience for entrepreneurs. It is based on a program we recently tested called "The Marketing Startup Series," a 6-week workshop to help three area startups create a marketing plan. It was a successful pilot and we are currently expanding the concept to be more comprehensive. Part of our success was attributed to the collaborative format, which created community and encouraged peer-to-peer feedback among entrepreneurs with diverse and unique backgrounds.

STARTUP BUILDER MEMBERSHIP (in development)

COST: \$TBD/mo

BENEFITS:

An all-inclusive membership which will include the following:

- **6-month WORKUP Membership** with full access to the facilities, amenities and additional programming.
- **6-week "Marketing Plan Builder" Series** (6, 2-hour sessions) held at WORKUP. Roundtable format which encourages sharing and collaborative feedback from participants.
- **6-week "Business Plan Builder" Series** (6, 2-hour sessions) held at WORKUP. Roundtable format which encourages sharing and collaborative feedback from participants.
- **Quickbooks Training** (2 hour sessions) held at WORKUP. Still looking into options and time needed to cover necessary topics.

STARTUP BUILDER WEEKEND (in development)

COST: \$?TBD/person

An all-inclusive, intense weekend workshop held at WORKUP and covering much of the above. The intention is to jumpstart the startup process for area entrepreneurs.



The atmosphere of collaboration and peer-to-peer sharing was key.



They were working sessions with lots of discussion.



Participants gained in-depth knowledge of each other's products/services.