

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
December 18, 2017
WORKUP, Willmar

Present: Shari Courtney, Deb Geister, Jean Geselius and Ryan Thielen

Excused: Aaron Backman, Melissa Knott, Emily Lien and Brittany VanDerBill

Absent: Donna Boonstra

Guest: Jayme Sczublewski, REDstar Creative

Staff: Connie Schmoll, Business Development Specialist

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

Chairperson Deb Geister called the meeting to order at approximately 12:03 p.m. and stated a quorum was not present.

Social Media Statistics. Jayme Sczublewski showed an overview of the Facebook statistics for the past month. Total fans continues to slowly increase each month. In the past 18 days, there have been 12 posts compared to 19 in the prior month; post reach 1,954 (down 19%); post impressions 3,263 (down 18%); post clicks 171 (up 24%); reactions 54 (down 22%); engaged users 182 (up 12%); page and post engagements 76 (down 20%); new fans 7 (up 75%). The top posts included the Willmar diverse community; new business Mexican Fusion; Business in Focus article; Celebrate the Light of the World; Social Media Breakfast group; Highway 23 article and B40 Country Grill & Burger Joint. It was noted that most of the posts are informational, which is growing the users; however, a call to action should maybe done in the future.

The EDC's LinkedIn following is growing. REDstar intends to do more cross sharing of information on the social media platforms. Chair Geister suggested the diverse BRE study would be a good webinar. Connie Schmoll reported the Community Integration Center held an open house this past weekend and had good attendance. How to get more follow through and more engagement from posts was mentioned. Could do a "submit your information" in order to download the diverse BRE report and include a "what does the study mean to you as a business person?"

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Fall Digital Newsletter. Sczublewski reported the newsletter was done in Constant Contact and emailed to 544 individuals. The newsletter had a 43% open rate (186) and a 36% click rate (71), which is very high compared to the industry standard. Unique clicks were on affordable housing—26 (click-through distribution 38%); Business in Focus—13 (distribution 109%); diverse

BRE study—10 (distribution 15%); Highway 23—34 (distribution 50%). It was recommended that the articles be added to LinkedIn.

NEW BUSINESS

2018 Goals. Chair Geister stated she would like to take the current Marketing Plan and incorporate a tactical plan. Marketing thus far has included community engagement and trying to attract businesses. It was noted LinkedIn is good for reaching businesses. Geister will do a first draft. The mission has been to create and elevate the brand of the EDC in the area with a goal of bringing in new ideas and working with existing resources to be able to expand.

The committee reviewed the current Marketing Plan (see attached):

Target Audience Groups: No changes suggested under either Local/Regional or Outside Region.

Strategy 1: Brand awareness. It would be interesting to do a survey on the perception of the local brand and what the EDC does. Could be done via social media or Survey Monkey.

Objective 1 Projects: Schmoll stated the West Central Angel Fund I is on its own now and has a website. Could do digital brochures rather than printed materials. Keep target industries of education and health care and create a project structure for each area. The Highway 23 Coalition is meeting regularly and a website has been developed. The EDC has a Highway 23 landing page that directs individuals to the Highway 23 Coalition site.

Objective 2 Projects: Continue doing digital newsletters. Sczublewski stated she had thought of doing a business spotlight in the newsletters.

Objective 3 Projects: Educational opportunities for businesses—in person or webinars or a combination. STARTUP Boot Camp at WORKUP—possibly add information to the website. Chair Geister suggested doing online classes. Schmoll noted the EDC's Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee is working on ag education and is looking to hold workshops this year. The EDC is the fiscal host for the KCEO's loan program. Could have a business attorney write an article on legal documents that are needed to start a business. It was noted that Conway, Deuth & Schmiesing, PLLP, does some seminars and partners with others to hold them. Sczublewski stated REDstar stopped doing MEETUP after 1 Million Cups started.

Strategy 2: Market the community outside the region. It was noted New London businesses are having an electronic marketing event, which the EDC should help promote. The New London Merchants Association is doing a good job. The EDC should be a resource. Get articles from business members on marketing they have done that have been successful and what has not been successful.

Other items mentioned:

- RSS feeds to businesses;
- Add a business building calendar to the website;

- Have a central business event calendar for business networking;
- Integrate the budget into the Marketing Plan.
- Promote the Best of Minnesota awards for Kandiyohi County.

Chair Geister will draft an outline of a new Marketing Plan incorporating a tactical plan for review at the next meeting.

Committee Members. Discussion will be held next month on the makeup of committee members and if more members are needed. A suggestion was made to invite Brittney Odens, Marketing Manager at Rice Memorial Hospital to join the committee.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:54 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is 12 noon, Monday, January 22, 2018 at WORKUP, 1601 Technology Drive NE, Willmar.



MARKETING PLAN

Updated as of 12/12/2017

Situation Analysis: The Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) is a government agency whose mission is to be a catalyst for economic growth of the greater Kandiyohi area. We do that in a wide variety of ways, including supporting existing businesses, assisting area entrepreneurs and recruiting targeted industries that are a fit for our region. While we have been successful in that mission, we face the ongoing challenge of educating our community, prospects and partners about how that is accomplished and what kinds of services we offer. We also lead area efforts to market our community to businesses outside of our region that are interested in locating or expanding here—a process that requires ongoing review and refinement in order to stay competitive.

Target Audience Groups:

1. **Local/Regional:** The EDC must reach our local and regional community for two reasons. First, we must educate them regarding our purpose and activities as a government-funded, volunteer-driven organization. Second, we must make our services and expertise known and available to local businesses and entrepreneurs who need help starting or expanding.
2. **Outside Region:** The EDC must aggressively market our area outside of our region for the purposes of attracting new businesses and talent to our community. We need to promote our brand to enhance our economic development efforts, showcase our quality of life and bring more people to the community.

STRATEGY 1: *Create awareness of EDC activities and services in our local/regional community.*

OBJECTIVES

1. Refine/remix EDC “brand”

PROJECTS

- a) Update/create templates for marketing materials
 - 1) **Completed fall 2017**—Replace large, out-of-date trade show booth display with three lighter, smaller pull up units. Work on design in second quarter of 2017.
 - 2) **Completed March 2017**—Update EDC introductory brochure
 - 3) Prepare West Central Angel Fund marketing piece—**the Fund is on its own and is developing its own marketing materials and website**
 - 4) Update target industries brochures/flyers
 - a. Education—3rd quarter of 2017

- b. Health Care—4th quarter of 2017
Completed brochures/flyers:
 - a. MinnWest Technology Campus July 2016
 - b. Willmar Industrial Park October 2016
 - c. Highway 23 Coalition April 2017
 - d. Agriculture being finalized May 2017
- 5) Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development (Ag) Marketing Subcommittee will seek to:
- a. Develop an overall marketing/public relations strategy with the EDC Marketing and Public Relations Committee
 - b. Distribute the Ag BRE Survey Report results and plan for implementation of strategies with the public
 - i. Report presented at two workshops on April 5, 2017
 - ii. Posted on Facebook
 - iii. Posted on EDC's website in two places
 - c. Update and enhance the trade show materials, including the trifold table top display and informational flyer. Both items will show the profile of agriculture and renewable energy in Kandiyohi County (Display completed March 2017; flyer finalized June 2017)
2. Be an agent of positive messaging about our business community and economy

PROJECTS

- a) Review and update website and annually check major employers and statistics
 - b) Create/publish social media content
 - 1) Facebook. Consider analytics (e.g. number of likes, hits, % of pull through)
 - 2) Twitter. Post at events more.
 - 3) LinkedIn. Add articles.
 - c) Create/publish monthly articles for the West Central Tribune business section (third Tuesday publish date, email to business@wctrib.com)
2017 publication dates: March 21, April 18, May 16, June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19, October 17, November 21, December 19
 - d) Create/distribute newsletter
 - 1) April—Spring 2017 digital only (not done)
 - 2) July--Summer 2017 digital only (not done)
 - 3) November—Fall 2017 digital only (completed 12/11/2017)
 - e) Participate in public forums to promote EDC activities
 - 1) Radio—monthly guest of Open Mic on KWLM
 - 2) Speak at City Council/EDA meetings outside of Willmar
3. Educate community about services/resources of EDC

PROJECTS

- a) Sponsor WORKUP programming partnership targeting start-ups and entrepreneurs (includes WORKUP, Ridgewater, KCEO and Heritage Bank)

- 1) QUP—third Wednesday of each month, 8:00-9:15 a.m.
- 2) MEETUP—fourth Wednesday of each month from 12:00-1:15 p.m.
- b) Support community organizations—be a part of messaging where appropriate
 - 1) Kandiyohi County CEO loan program—EDC reviews and administers loans; in 2016 donated two memberships at WORKUP
 - 2) TEDxWillmarLive (2016 silver sponsor \$500)
 - 3) Chamber Connection
 - 4) West Central Minnesota Area Job Fair—March 21 and September 2017 (REDstar designs marketing materials)
 - 5) Ag & Animal Science Conference, September 26, 2017, MinnWest Technology Campus (networking break sponsor, 2016—\$2,000; 2017—\$1,500)
 - 6) University of Minnesota Showcase—November (refreshments sponsor \$100)

STRATEGY 2: *Market our community outside of our region in order to attract targeted business and talent.*

OBJECTIVES

1. Deliver specific, sought-after area metrics such as workforce, demographics and accessibility
 - a) on website
 - b) presented to EDC Joint Operations Board

PROJECTS

- a) Update customizable proposal template to attract businesses
2. Create customized packages to attract business interest

PROJECTS

- a) Member of DEED's Marketing Partnership (2017—\$625)
- b) Advertise in DEED's statewide marketing publication. Re-evaluate the effectiveness of purchasing the full-page ad. Gathered information from other cities; determined cost exceeded value; article in *Business In Focus* at no cost to the EDC and participated in half-page ad with City of Willmar and Willmar MUC
3. Support the recruitment efforts of area businesses for workers and talent

PROJECTS

- a) Work with human resource departments to develop online resources
- b) Create LinkedIn page for recruitment (Completed 2017)
- c) Develop a friends and family campaign
- d) Develop a formal Trailing Spouse Network
 - 1) Develop partnerships with area school foundations