

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION/RECRUITMENT (BRE/R) COMMITTEE MEETING**

MINUTES

May 13, 2022

EDC Boardroom and Via ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Corky Berg, Sam Bowen, Jim Ellingson, Steve Gardner, Les Heitke (via Zoom), Jennifer Mendoza (via Zoom) and Kelsey Vosika

Excused: Samantha Crow and Bridget Paulson

Absent: Roger Imdieke

Guest: Mary Warszynski, Employment Plus

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director and Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager

Secretarial: Cathy Skindelen, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc. (LAA)

Chair Jim Ellingson called the meeting to order at approximately 11:00 a.m.

AGENDA—Added to the agenda was a video of the FedEx construction project.

IT WAS MOVED BY Corky Berg, SECONDED BY Mary Warszynski, to approve the revised Agenda. MOTION CARRIED.

MINUTES—

IT WAS MOVED BY Sam Bowen, SECONDED BY Corky Berg, to approve the Minutes of the March 18, 2022 meeting as emailed. MOTION CARRIED.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS—

Elevate Class Update. Sarah Swedburg presented a summary of the Elevate Community Business Academy (see attached). The summary lists all of the Elevate graduates, their businesses or prospective businesses and a short bio. Success stories of the graduates will be highlighted for social media and newsletter content. Items of interest include Abdiweli Yusuf of Amin Grocery working on a renovation project, and Nick and Candace Aaker of The Goodness opening a coffee trailer, which is a mobile space for quick ready-to-order coffee. The coffee trailer visits MinnWest Technology Campus on Friday mornings. It will be at Creekside Nursery in rural Pennock this weekend and was at Stacy's Nursery for its Mother's Day sale. Hans and Victoria Hibma and Danny Carranza are graduates working toward opening a business.

The current Elevate class consists of nine students. Class number eight, a business simulation game for a service-oriented business, has been completed. Yusuf and Carranza participated as volunteers. The majority of the current class is female and own an existing business. One student plans to open a clothing store in Willmar. One-on-one sessions were held with each student at the halfway point. Beginning in Week 9

special guests will attend the classes. Christina Boike from Christianson PLLP will discuss budgeting and bookkeeping practices, and Jami Tanner from the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce will discuss membership opportunities for graduates. Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) funds one year of Chamber membership for each graduate for networking opportunities. Graduation will be June 28, 2022 at the Willmar Education and Arts Center from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Dates for the fall session will be finalized in the near future, and recruiting will begin immediately to accommodate planning and arranging schedules to attend. There is a list of people interested in attending class, including several who wanted to participate in the spring session but weren't able to make it work. Walk-ins to the EDC looking to start a business are encouraged to enroll. The EDC Joint Operations Board approved a Somali translation of the Elevate curriculum, which will be financed with a state grant through 2023. Two classes in the fall (English and Somali) will be fully financed, as well as one English class next spring. It costs approximately \$25,000 to run two sessions in a year. Expenses include training instructors, materials, license fees, website maintenance and graduation. Technical assistance, such as time with lawyers, accountants and IT experts, is available to the students. Other topics discussed were diversity in the class, how the class is applied, field trips to businesses and child care funding. Bowen suggested alumni of Ridgewater College programs who may be interested in starting a business would be good candidates for the program. Les Heitke mentioned that Elevate could be the topic of a home town story segment of 5-10 minutes with KSAX in Alexandria or metro area television stations to gain exposure. Kelsey Vosika suggested the students meet with small businesses to gain from their experience. Warszynski mentioned the class could attend the weekly Chamber Connection events.

FedEx Video. Backman presented a recent video of the FedEx construction project. The roof is nearing completion. The south side of the building has 33 loading docks. Tons of dirt are being hauled in preparation for internal roads. This will be a sorting facility that operates 24/7. The nearest similar facilities are in St. Cloud and the Twin Cities. The other FedEx facilities in Willmar will remain open as FedEx Freight, while the new facility will be FedEx Ground. Backman is anticipating the growth of related businesses, for example, Dooley's Petroleum is considering a fuel center near the facility.

NEW BUSINESS—

Addition of Mary Warszynski to BRE/R Committee.

IT WAS MOVED BY Steve Gardner, SECONDED BY Sam Bowen, to add Mary Warszynski to the Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment Committee. MOTION CARRIED.

Action Items from EDC Planning Session. Backman asked the BRE/R Committee to focus on two strategic priorities from the EDC Planning Session: maximizing human potential and housing development. The Workforce Development Subcommittee is assigned responsibility for maximizing human potential, with a goal of helping individuals in Kandiyohi County reach their full potential through career awareness, training and development. Key partners in the endeavor include Ridgewater College, Central Minnesota Jobs and Training Service, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission and CLUES. Action items include the following:

- **Career Awareness/Marketing.**
 - **Videos highlighting area careers.** People in various careers in the area could be interviewed for the video.
 - **Informing people of career opportunities through job fairs and social media.** An in-person job fair was held in the spring and a virtual job fair was held for the first time in January.
 - **Marketing materials/social media strategies to showcase Ridgewater College courses/Customized Training and Continuing Education and local careers.** Backman suggested a brochure that highlights Ridgewater College's customized training and

shows a partnership with the EDC.

- **Youth/Adult Career Development**

- **Supporting/developing secondary school programs to feed workforce pipeline.**

- An idea considered by the Joint Operations Board is creating videos to inform teachers of career options available in the area. A group of math and science teachers visited Relco, LLC. and were surprised by the variety of jobs available here in Willmar.

- **Alternative Career Pathways**

- **Guidance/Training toward new career entrances/pathways.** Heitke commented that Fortress and Project Turnabout are two groups looking to become more independent in the workforce. Project Turnabout's program allows participants to stay in townhomes provided if they agree to get additional education from Ridgewater College.

- **Upskilling/training for employees (retention/efficiency).** Swedburg reported West Central Industries has clientele available to handle mundane and tedious but necessary tasks for area businesses. This could allow more free time for employees to learn more advanced skills.

- **Reentry into the workforce through new pathways.** Corky Berg mentioned the Kandiyohi County Sentenced to Serve program, suggesting a continuum into the workforce for those leaving the program. Backman added there are businesses, such as Bargains and Blessings, that reach out to these people. Kelsey Vosika reported job seekers from families with background issues need to be considered, as many are very capable and would do very well.

The second priority discussed was housing development. The BRE/R Committee has been assigned responsibility for this task, with a goal of developing alternative housing options to increase the availability of affordable workforce housing stock countywide. Key partners are the Vision 2040 subcommittee, Kandiyohi County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, city council, realtors and developers. Willmar Mayor Marv Calvin is forming a task force to address the housing availability issue. Action items include:

- **Develop NEW Housing Concepts/Opportunities.**

- **Reimagine housing; explore alternative and affordable housing options.**

- Suggestions included considering allowances for accessory dwelling units, a tiny home subdivision, reducing the allowable size of lots, permitting narrower streets that have parking limited to one side or a cul de sac for turnarounds. Market the Renaissance Zone (RZ) to small developers. Incentivize landlords to renovate existing properties and bring duplexes back to life.

Ridgewater College CDL Grant Approval/Next Steps. Bowen reported meeting with the project coordinator from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The Targeted Communities Capital Project Grant is a new grant for DEED, so it is a learning process for everyone involved, including DEED, Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB), and the Minnesota State College system. There were questions in regard to the Ridgewater application because Ridgewater College was the only state agency that received funding. The definition of assets was ambiguous, as it read "fixed assets or other capital equipment necessary for the completion of the intended outcome." Bowen requested \$80,000 for the purchase of trailers, but it was determined all assets included in the grant request need to be fixed. The concrete pad, electrical, gravel and fencing will qualify. Ridgewater College will contract through MMB to receive the funds on a reimbursement basis. Funds need to be encumbered by 2024. A storage building for tractors and trailers is necessary, but not covered by this grant. An off-site building will be rented.

Once MMB has completed the contract, Ridgewater College will send out requests for proposals (RFPs) for pre-design services, design, construction and storm water management. Bowen is hoping construction will begin in the Fall, however, Spring is the more likely timeframe. Ridgewater College also applied for a Good Jobs Challenge grant, and is awaiting results. Bowen is not optimistic due to the large volume of applicants. The possibility of seeking Kandiyohi County's ARPA funds for the CDL program was discussed.

REPORTS—

Workforce Development Subcommittee. Bowen reported the Spring job fair was held at Ridgewater College on

April 6, 2022 and was attended by 53 vendors and 275 job seekers. There was a healthy mix of community members and students in attendance. Hosting job fairs at the college has become the norm and is a very efficient process. More marketing is needed to foster engagement from students and the community. Vendors were exposed to programs Ridgewater College has to offer. Backman spoke with the Executive Director of Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center, who was looking for young people for the summer and older volunteers, and was able to meet both needs. The majority of businesses in attendance felt the job fair was a successful venture.

Proposed JOBLINE Collaborations with KDJS. Backman reported a discussion with Bob Rose at KDJS Radio regarding Ingstad Media's launch of JOBLINE as an option for employers to advertise job openings between job fairs. Up to seven employers per week will be highlighted. One "featured employer" will receive a 30-second ad airing six times per day and inclusion on Facebook and text line blasts. Up to six "spotlight employers" will receive 15-second ads airing six times per day. As a partner, the EDC would promote the program at no cost to the EDC, targeting job seekers who may not be aware of local opportunities. A recorded script that identifies the EDC as a JOBLINE partner will be aired. All radio stations connected to Ingstad Media are involved.

IT WAS MOVED BY Corky Berg, SECONDED BY Mary Warszynski, to partner with Ingstad Media in the creation of JOBLINE. MOTION CARRIED.

[Bowen was excused from the meeting]

Virtual Job Fair Frequency. It was recommended to host a virtual job fair twice per year, with the next scheduled in early fall, approximately one month apart from the in-person job fair. The previous virtual job fair had over 50 vendors with 79 participants filling out the forms online. Many were from outside Kandiyohi County.

IT WAS MOVED BY Steve Gardner, SECONDED BY Kelsey Vosika, to schedule two virtual job fairs per year. MOTION CARRIED.

CLUES. Jennifer Mendoza reported CLUES is changing its mode of operation, offering help to prepare for work with resumes, cover letters and mock interviews. CLUES has begun the second round of its certified nursing assistant (CNA) course. Seven students are enrolled and all made it through the first portion. The Willmar office of CLUES works with clientele representing 10-13 countries, including Thailand, Jamaica, Morocco and Latin America. Facebook has been instrumental in gaining exposure. Mendoza was able to help an individual from Jamaica who didn't have work authorization until the day before the CNA cohort started. Mendoza managed to get her enrolled, and now she has a job paying \$30 per hour. Mendoza informed the committee of a Cinco de Mayo celebration taking place at Spurs from 3:30-7:00 p.m. on Saturday May 14, 2022 with live music. Mendoza is setting up interactive games that would include questions, such as how much will you make if you have a high school diploma, Associates Degree, etc. She will have a booth at

Rockin' Robbins all summer in hopes of reaching more people. She plans to start a gardening group to talk about food, healthy eating and gardening.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no other business,

IT WAS MOVED BY Steve Gardner, SECONDED BY Jennifer Mendoza, to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:28 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next committee meeting is **11:00 a.m., Friday, September 2, 2022** at the EDC Boardroom and via ZOOM video conference.

TO: Joint Operations Board

FROM: Sarah Swedburg
Business Development Manager

DATE: May 12, 2022

RE: Elevate Report

The third class of Elevate Community Business Academy is underway. The following report details our past and current students and the status of their businesses!

Graduates:

Hteh Hteh Hta Rue - Chaws Asian Market – New Business (Grocery); Microloan Recipient

Stephanie Thompson - Wings Gymnastics – Existing Business (Gymnastics Gym)

Abdiqani Mahamed - Hakim Trucking Company – New Business (Trucking)

Abdulah Omar - Ain-u-Shams – Existing Business (Grocery)

Abdiweli Yusuf - Amin Grocery – Existing Business (Grocery); Purchased a building and working towards expansion; RLF Loan Recipient

Hans & Victoria Hibma - Rendezvous - Working towards opening a new business (Entertainment Center); Currently working on drafting a business plan and finding a location

Candace & Nick Aaker - Goodness Coffee House – Existing Business (Coffee Shop); Just began new coffee trailer – an expansion they had been working on throughout class

Fatouma Hachim - Fatou Boutique – New business (Online Clothing Store); Built website for online sales throughout class

Mohamed Abdi – Working towards opening a new business (Shoe Store)

Danny Carranza - Smokey's Barbeque – Working towards opening a new business (Restaurant); Currently working on finding a location to finalize determination of start up costs; Newest Elevate Instructor

Current Class:

Dawn Stahl – Dandelion Wishes LLC dba Mainstream Boutique – Working towards opening a new business (Clothing Store); Currently working on lease agreement

Jessica Hanson – Willmar Hypnosis – Existing Business (Hypnotherapist)

Scott & Stacy Holwerda – S&S Sweets and Treats AND The Hive – Existing Businesses (Cottage Foods Bakery and Event Space)

Tiffany Farrier – Kandi Acres Farm, LLC – Existing Business (Goat Farm)

Mery Castro – Yireh Creations – Existing Business (Custom T-shirts and Merchandise)

Stephanie Lopez – Spurs Bar & Grill – Existing Business (Restaurant); Working on some potential expansion activities

Zethukia Momanyi – Zethukia's Beauty – Existing Business (Natural Hair Salon); Working on some potential expansion activities

Abdiwali Ali – Care Connect – Existing Business (Home Health Services)



STRATEGIC PLANNING



2022

Appendices:

- A – 2021 EDC Accomplishments
- B – 2021 Strategic Planning Goals Update
- C – 2022 Business Support Survey Summary
- D – Planning Session Presentation
- E – EDC Strategic Goals/Objectives 2022-2023



Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission

2022 Strategic Planning Session Summary April 7, 2022 Willmar Conference Center

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 EDC 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 an annual 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, 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 EDC throughout 2022-2023, recognizing the past goal areas and considering the changing needs of the EDC service area.

Discussions gathering insights from EDC staff were used to determine the focus for the Strategic Planning Retreat on April 7, 2022. Insights also guided the materials to be made available to planning participants prior to and during the session. Participants received the following documents (*attached as Appendices A, B and C*): 2021 EDC Accomplishments, 2021 Strategic Planning Goals Update and 2022 Business Support Survey Summary.

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 April 7, 2022 for a full-day retreat. The presentation used to guide retreat discussions can be found in *Appendix D*.

FRAMING THE DAY

The group began by participating in an exercise to reveal the importance of having diverse perspectives and strengths when working together collaboratively. After reviewing the EDC's existing Mission and Vision, participants reviewed the work to take place throughout the day.

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.

Planning Retreat Expected Outcomes

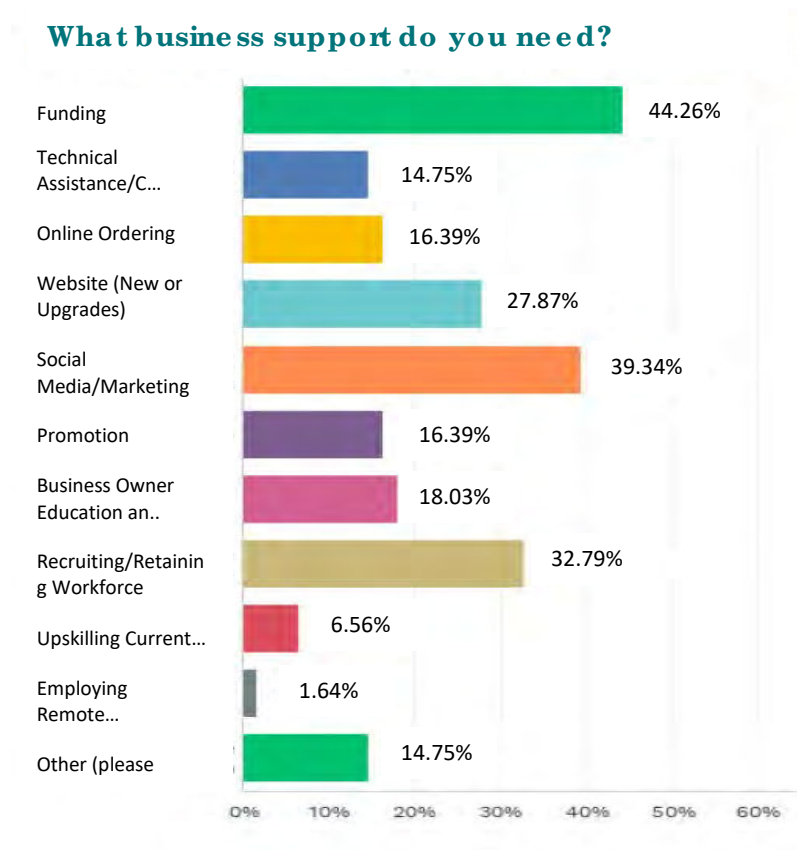
- *Share insights and explore what we have learned in the past year*
- *Discuss what is working well and what we can improve as we work to be a catalyst for economic growth*
- *Define goals and specific objectives that will make the most difference for the future of Kandiyohi County people and businesses*
- *Strengthen the ways in which we can work together to create and support prosperity, innovation, international competitiveness, and enhanced quality of life*

Insights to Guide the Future

Business Insights

Sarah Swedburg, Business Development Manager with the EDC shared business insights collected through the Business Support Survey sent to businesses (see Appendix C). As of April 2022, there were 70 survey respondents. Over half of the respondents indicated that they know how to access EDC resources. When asked about their business operations since March of 2020, 95.7% are still in operation in Kandiyohi County and over half have changed their business operations in response to current realities. Of the business support most needed, **Funding** ranked # 1 (44.26% of respondents). Following closely behind were **Social Media/Marketing** (39.34%), and **Recruiting/Retaining Workforce** (32.79%)

Planning participants heard from business representatives/owners, Hteh Hteh Hta Rue of Chaw's Asian Market and Ryan Vatnsdal of Erickson Plumbing, Heating & A/C. Both shared the importance of the EDC's support and funding in helping their businesses. Ryan Vatnsdal shared the challenge of attracting/retaining workers, indicating they will train their own workers but could benefit from having a plumbing/heating program at Ridgewater College. Dr. Craig Johnson, Ridgewater College President, shared interest in offering a program as well as the difficulty in attracting educators to teach classes in this field. Hteh Rue shared her story of her family's history in grocery store management and her hopes of purchasing a building to expand her operations in the future. As a family-run business-owner, she is grateful that she and her family live in a supportive community like Willmar.



Overall, participants shared the following challenges and opportunities of businesses in the area:

Business Insights...

Challenges

- Business expansion is limited by workforce availability/# of employees
- Child care, housing and broadband are still significant challenges for workers/businesses
- Business owners are still hesitant to ask for help or may not know how to ask; a need for increased awareness/education
- Entrepreneurs need stronger business skills

Opportunities

- Funding and technical assistance help increase business appetite
- Technology and investments in marketing can help businesses
- The EDC and Ridgewater College can help with awareness, education and business skills
- Rising gas prices may be contributing to increased local shopping
- Our area is blessed with diverse businesses/people

Highlights of 2021 Accomplishments & Progress Toward Current Goals

Aaron Backman, EDC Executive Director, shared several key 2021 accomplishments and progress toward 2021 goals. (Key accomplishments can be found in *Appendices A: 2021 EDC Accomplishments* and *B: 2021 Strategic Planning Goals Update*.) Areas of note included:

- **COVID Business Assistance:** MPR grants to 60 businesses/6 nonprofits (\$844,000 total); Revolving Loan Funds to 4 businesses (\$127,500 total)
- **Industrial Development:** FedEx Distribution Center (a 217,325 sq. ft. facility on a 27-acre site)
- **Housing:** Unique Opportunities (two 72-unit multi-family housing buildings); Preserve on 24th (two multi-family housing buildings with 36 units each); Bethesda North Pointe (Senior housing project in New London with 24 independent living units, 18 assisted living and 18 memory care units); Block 25 Lofts (4-level 58-unit multi-family complex in Willmar's Renaissance Zone)
- **Workforce Development:** In-person Job Fair at Ridgewater College (50+ employers/300 job seekers); Workforce Solutions Summit (74 attendees); Virtual Job Fair (54 employers; 79 attendees); Diverse workforce training (CLUES, Ridgewater, CMJTS)
- **Elevate Community Business Academy:** Education/Mentorship program focused on creating economic opportunities for underserved minorities (12 students representing 10 businesses graduated from the first two cohorts); program recognized statewide through a Small Business Partnership Grant from MN DEED (\$76,000) to fund the program through June 2023 and allow the Fall 2022 class to be translated/taught in Somali. The EDC also received the 2021 Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers' Outstanding Economic Development Program award.

Additional efforts helped advance child care, broadband, agriculture and marketing. Refer to the aforementioned appendices for detailed accomplishments.

Evaluating 2021 Strategic Priorities & Looking Toward Future Priorities

The group considered what areas of current priorities are working well, what might the EDC improve upon, and what might be missing or need greater attention from the EDC moving forward. In small group discussions, the following insights were lifted up ...

What's working well?

- The EDC's ability to collaborate, be innovative, and quick to act (noting that the EDC has a well-functioning team)
- The business support provided during/following COVID helped businesses persevere
- The EDC is effective in developing minority businesses; this was advanced by adding the Elevate program in 2021
- The EDC's involvement in job fairs and the Workforce Solutions Summit is a great start to being more engaged in workforce challenges
- The broad focus of the EDC aids in the support of all people, cultures, businesses
- The EDC's persistence is paying off in areas such as broadband, Highway 23 and child care

EDC's Strengths

- Well-functioning team
- Ability to partner/collaborate
- Quick to act
- Innovative thinking
- Gathers info to understand needs
- Measurable success toward goals
- Persistence – Broadband/Hwy 23

What could the EDC improve upon?

Participants shared insights that revealed six overarching areas with specific ideas for possible improvement (see image below.) Several participants sighted a need from innovative ways to support workforce development and overall business needs all across the county.

What could be improved?

Child Care and Housing

- Intentional focus/strategies
- Working with developers on a variety of housing options
- Incentives, subsidies, funding

EDC Branding/Communications

- Updated branding/logo
- Intentional marketing/awareness of services (particularly outside of Willmar)

Broader Countywide Engagement

- Engage and evaluate the needs of ALL communities in Kandiyohi County

Business Support

- Continue outreach momentum
- Education of services to more businesses
- More RLF/Micro Loans
- Business to business mentors

Showcasing Kandiyohi County

- Showcase the area/our successes
- Volunteers to share/tout area amenities

Greater Diversity on Boards/Committees

- Age, gender, geography, and cultures
- Cultural awareness for event planning

What is missing (or may need greater attention)?

Participants shared the following insights regarding areas that may benefit from more focused attention:

What is missing?

People Attraction/Recruitment

- Bring them back campaigns (students/young families)
- Focus on trailing spouses
- Attract entrepreneurs from other geographic areas

Career/Human Development

- Benefits of technical training/degrees
- Awareness of local jobs/careers
- Youth and adults reaching full potential

Broader Countywide Engagement

- Evaluate needs of ALL communities in Kandiyohi County
- Collaborate with other economic development groups/mayors
- Committee members as ambassadors
- Meetings held in locations across county
- Greater collaboration for tourism

Refugee Resettlement Planning

- Planning
- Awareness and education

Identifying Key Priorities for 2022-23

EDC Board and Committee Members and other participants explored and considered several potential priority areas for the EDC including, Child Care, Housing, Broadband, Maximizing Human Potential (Workforce Development), Countywide Engagement, Communications/Marketing, Business Support, and Agriculture. Discussions about these priorities revealed insights about the importance of these areas in building a strong economy:

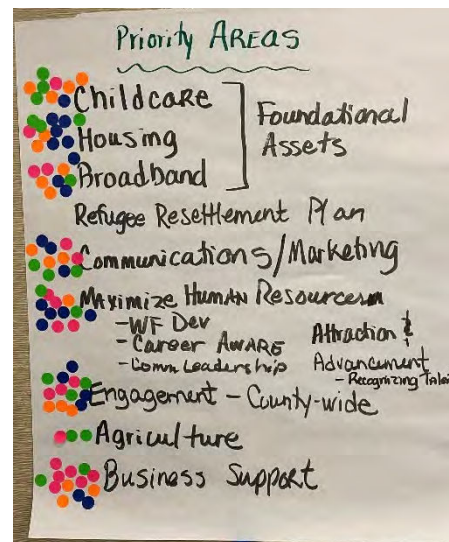
- Child Care, Housing and Broadband are key foundational assets
- Maximizing human potential includes:
 - Developing our current/future workforce
 - Building awareness of career opportunities
 - Recognizing talent/opportunities for advancement
 - Developing community leaders
 - Attracting people from outside the area
- Communication/marketing includes:
 - Improved branding/marketing of EDC and its services
 - Increased marketing of Kandiyohi County area—why live, work, play here
- Business Support—need to continue the momentum started through COVID
- More intentional countywide engagement can help ensure the EDC is supporting the economic development needs all across Kandiyohi County

Top Priority Areas

- Child Care
- Housing
- Broadband
- Maximizing Human Potential
- Countywide Engagement
- Communications/Marketing
- Business Support
- Agriculture

Following small and large group discussion, individual participants selected their top 4 priorities. The blue dots represented their top priority, the other colors are their second, third, and fourth rankings. Through this process and further discussion, participants ranked the key as follows:

1. Maximizing Human Potential
2. Housing
3. Countywide Engagement
4. Communications/Marketing
5. Business Support
6. Broadband
7. Child Care
8. Agriculture



Strategic Focus Areas for 2022-23

While all of these areas are important and will be part of the EDC's efforts over the next 12-24 months, participants agreed that strategic focus and specific action plans should be developed for the priorities shown below. Breaking into groups according to their personal interests, the group worked to generate ideas for specific action items for each of these strategic focus areas. More detailed strategic goals and objectives can be found in *Appendix E*.

Strategic Focus Areas for 2022-2023 (As selected by participants)

Maximizing Human Potential

Helping every individual in Kandiyohi County reach their full potential through career awareness, training, and development

Countywide Engagement

Intentional outreach and engagement in communities all across Kandiyohi County to determine needs and provide awareness of EDC support and services

Communications/Marketing

Improved EDC branding and marketing strategies to reduce confusion about who we are/what we do

Housing

Developing alternative housing options to increase the availability of affordable workforce housing stock countywide

Business Support

Continued momentum of supporting existing businesses and fostering the growth of new business opportunities through appreciation, awareness, technical support, and access to funding

Next Steps

Participants of the 2022 EDC Strategic Planning Session made significant strides in developing a shared vision of success and key strategies that will guide the work of the Commission over the next 12 to 24 months. Initial action plans drafted for each focus area can be reviewed as *Appendix E: EDC Strategic Goals/Objectives 2022-2023*. EDC staff and committees will further define specific action items for each of the five priority areas and plans will be brought to the EDC Boards for further consideration.

Maximizing Human Potential

GOAL: Help individuals in Kandiyohi County reach their full potential through career awareness, training and development.

Committee: BRE Subcommittee: Workforce Development

Key Partners: Ridgewater College, CMJTS, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission

Strategic Objectives:

Career Awareness/Marketing

- Videos highlighting area careers
- Informing people of career opportunities through job fairs, social media
- Marketing materials/social media strategies to showcase Ridgewater College courses/Customized Training and Continuing Education and local careers

Youth/Adult Career Development

- Supporting/developing secondary school programs to feed workforce pipeline
- Aiding employer engagement with their future workforce

Alternative Career Pathways

- Guidance/Training toward new career entrances/pathways
- Upskilling/training for employees (retention/efficiency)
- Reentry into the workforce through new pathways

Housing Development

GOAL: Develop alternative housing options to increase the availability of affordable workforce housing stock countywide.

Committee: Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment (BRE) Committee

Key Partners: Vision 2040 Housing Committee, Kandiyohi County HRA, local City Council representatives, local realtors/developers

Strategic Objectives:

Developing NEW Housing Concepts/Opportunities

- Reimagining housing; exploring alternative and affordable housing options (e.g., reinvent mobile home parks, incorporating bungalow courts)
 - Developing housing that can grow with families (home design includes the full-sized end product, but the home can be built in stages, as family size and incomes grow)

- Evaluate/improve zoning requirements to allow expanded opportunities
 - Consider allowances for the construction and incorporation of accessory dwelling units (backyard guest house for grandparents, adult children with disabilities, etc.)
 - Consider allowances for smaller lot sizes—more households per linear foot of street, sewer, etc.
 - Consider establishing a tiny homes subdivision

Rehabilitation of Existing Housing Stock

- Maximize the use and quality of existing housing stock
- Work with developers/property owners to fix existing housing stock
- Reduce absentee landlords (consider ordinance adjustments that require landlords or their representatives to live within 30 minutes or similar)

Cross-Agency Collaboration

- Work with multiple agencies/governmental units to increase affordable housing stock countywide over the next five years (set specific goals for # of units)

Countywide Engagement (Public Relations)

GOAL: Intentional outreach and engagement in communities across Kandiyohi County to determine needs and build connections to EDC support and services

Committee: Marketing and Public Relations

Key Partners: City Councils; Local Economic Development Groups; Chambers of Commerce, Local Businesses/Community Members

Strategic Objectives:

Intentional Outreach to Build Relationships, Awareness and to Gather Insights

- Connections with community banks and businesses across the County
- Town Hall meetings to hear needs/priorities
- Identify community representatives for ongoing communication and diverse participation on board/committees

Expanding Meeting/Event Locations

- Host EDC Board/Committee meetings, Elevate and other events in a broad array of communities

Sharing Countywide Success Stories

- Lift up success stories of businesses/communities all across Kandiyohi County to help promote opportunities and quality of life all across the County

Advancing EDC Branding and Marketing Efforts

GOAL: Position the EDC with updated branding to enhance its ability to reach target audiences and increase targeted outreach to Kandiyohi County and beyond.

Committee: Marketing and Public Relations

Key Partners: Potential focus group participants: local marketing professionals, business professionals, Chambers of Commerce representatives

Strategic Objectives:

EDC Branding Refresh

- Updates to brand, logo, taglines to aid brand consistency and understanding of EDC (who we are/what we do/how we can help)
- Website updates and enhanced functionality

Developing Targeted Messaging/Outreach

- Identify key audiences and associated key messages
- Share relevant information of importance to key audiences
- (Note: Refer to marketing-related strategies within other goal areas)

Intentional Kandiyohi County Marketing

- Identify strategic opportunities to tout Kandiyohi County as a place to live, work, play
- Intentional marketing of the County as THE place for entrepreneurs (effort to attract entrepreneurs to Kandiyohi County)

Business Support

GOAL: Continued momentum of supporting existing businesses and fostering the growth of new business opportunities through appreciation, awareness, technical support and access to funding.

Committee: BRE Subcommittee: Business Support

Key Partners: Local Lenders; Lending Partners

Strategic Objectives:

Relationships with Businesses

- Intentional outreach to businesses all across Kandiyohi County to identify countywide needs/opportunities
- Focused support for emerging entrepreneurs and diverse businesses through technical assistance and programs such as Elevate Community Business Academy

Awareness/Education of EDC services

- Align identified business needs/opportunities with EDC and partner support/services

Encourage Business Growth/Expansion

- Identify and work to support businesses struggling with workforce challenges (see Human Potential Goal)
- Utilize Opportunity/Renaissance Zones to aid business growth/expansion

Additional Areas (Addressed by Existing Committees/ Groups)

Broadband

Strategic Objectives: Continue objectives defined during 2021 planning including education, awareness, and advocacy for countywide broadband.

Child Care

Strategic Objectives: Reinvigorate Rural Child Care Innovation Program group and assist in the reassessment of goals/strategies for 2022-2024

Agriculture

Strategic Objectives: Continue targeted activities that leverage Kandiyohi County's agricultural assets and provide education of new opportunities, such as industrial hemp.

JOBLINE PARTNERSHIP

Ingstad Media in Willmar that includes radio stations KDJS-FM (*Hot Country 95.3*), KDJS-AM 1590/105.7 (*FOXNEWS Radio and home of the MN TWINS*) and KRVY 97.3 (*CLASSIC HITS*) and known as the BIG JOB FAIR radio stations, has developed a new initiative to bridge the gap between the in-person job fairs.

We are ready to launch JOBLINE. Here is what makes JOBLINE unique. At 620, 1020 and 220 both AM and PM (6x daily/7 days a week) we will air JOBLINE on our stations. We have selected these times as we know when our fans/listeners are most engaged, active and receptive. With radio reaching 92% of all Americans each week we know that our fans listen in the morning, at the office, in the vehicle, the tractor, the shop, evenings, overnight on their third shift and work and more. We know how to reach the masses with the right messages and at the right time.

Here is why JOBLINE will be crucial to the success of local employers looking to fill positions and ultimately onboard employees. The active job seeker is already applying, but they might not be aware of local openings, it's the passive job seeker who might not know about great opportunities because they are NOT on job boards, reading employment ads...but they are listening. They listen a lot and for extended periods of time.

Here is where your organization can join forces with us at no cash outlay to you.

As a partner in this initiative, we will mention your commitment to this initiative on promotional commercials telling our fans about JOBLINE. This is bigger than the radio stations, this is bigger than one group, this is a collaboration of many. The promotional commercials will air one hour before JOBLINE airs, speaking about the partners, and inviting our fans to listen in one hour for JOBLINE. These air 6x per day as well.

We also ask you and your organization to come to our radio stations to record prepared scripts that we will weave into the promotional commercials, and openings to JOBLINE etc. We also ask that you continue to deploy your tried-and-true methods of reaching out to employers and employees and mention and invite others on the receiving end to listen to JOBLINE. As you distribute this information to potential employers, they will ask you how to participate in JOBLINE.

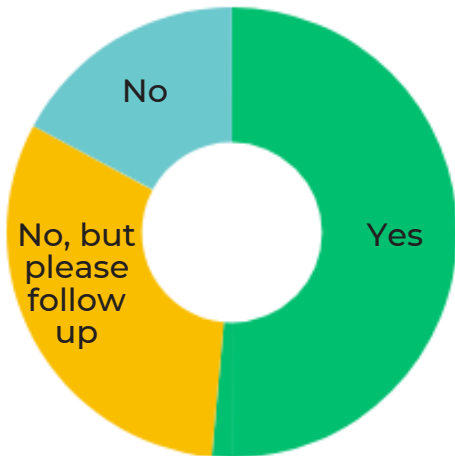
Transparency and more about JOBLINE. We are limiting this to 7 employers per week. The first heard will be considered the featured employer, followed by those identified as spotlight employers. The featured receives a 30 second commercial, position #1 and inclusion on our Facebook and text line blasts along with the airing 6x per day. The spotlight employer will fall into that 2 to 7 position and be aired 6x daily. These are :15 second commercials. It is anticipated that this feature in total will be 2:30 seconds in length. For this initiative I have greatly reduced our rates for participation. The featured one-week investment is \$756, and a featured employer cannot air more than 2 consecutive weeks. The spotlight investment is \$462 per week. These air 7 days per week, with fresh ones airing every Wednesday.

Our team at the radio stations will actively reach out to employers that we know need to hire. Remember we are the BIG Job Fair stations. We connect with many multiple times per year. In the instances that someone asks you how to participate, just share my name and phone number as we will provide the details, check availability (*remember only 7 per week*) prepare the scripts, get approvals of copy, billing etc.

BUSINESS SUPPORT SURVEY RESULTS

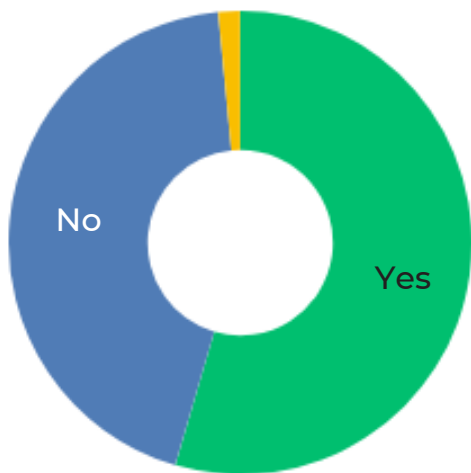
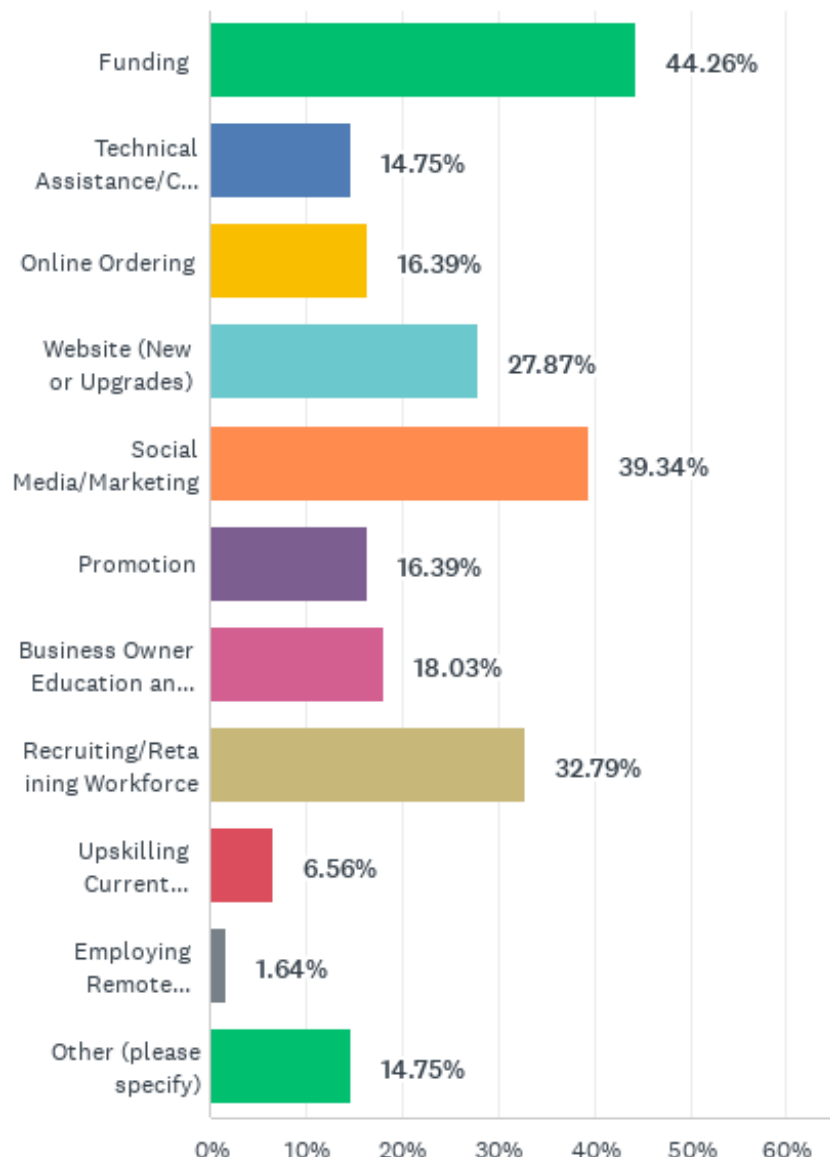
70
Survey
Respondents

95.7%
Still Operating in
Kandiyohi County



**Do you know how to
access EDC resources?**

What business support do you need?



**Have you changed your
business operations
since March 2020?**

The BRE Business Support Subcommittee created this survey as a first step to reconnect with businesses that received pandemic relief funds from the EDC. The goal of this survey is to inform the EDC's work to support businesses over the next 1-3 years.



"I haven't qualified for any state or government funds, but at the beginning of 2021 I was blessed with an EDC fund, it helped me pay for past due rent, electricity, and people I owed who lent me money through the year to make it through."

"We increased our presence on social media selling sites."

"We went through strategic planning with a professional coach: promote the most profitable services, inventory control and more savings to prevent another catastrophe."

"We were forced to change our business operations as our 2 mainstay brands do not have most of the styles or sizes available due to factory shutdowns and shipping issues. "

"We have had to increase prices and find ways to get employees."

"We cut down hours of operation to save on bills."