

**KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)
JOINT POWERS BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ANNUAL MEETING
MINUTES
January 25, 2024
EDC Board Room, Willmar and Via Zoom Video Conference**

Present: Julie Asmus (via Zoom), George “Corky” Berg (via Zoom), Vicki Davis, Steve Gardner, Roger Imdieke and Doug Reese

Staff: Aaron Backman, Executive Director

Guest: Tanna Stucky, Child Care Community Coordinator (via Zoom)

Media: Jennifer Kotila, West Central Tribune

Secretarial: Nancy Birkeland, Legal & Administrative Assistants, Inc.

Vice Chair Steve Gardner called the meeting to order at approximately 11:40 a.m. and declared a quorum was present.

AGENDA—

IT WAS MOVED BY Doug Reese, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to approve the Agenda and following Consent Agenda.:

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approve: 1. Minutes of October 26, 2023
2. Minutes of November 20, 2023 special meeting
3. Minutes of January 11, 2024 special meeting
4. Financial reports as of October 31, November 30 and December 31, 2023
- Ratify: 1. Actions of the Joint Operations Board:
a. Childcare forgivable loans itemized on the December 31, 2023 Balance Sheet
b. Agreement for Services for Elevate Community Business Academy with Sarah Swedburg for January 1-May 31, 2024 (see attached)
c. Revolving Loan Fund loan to Rendezvous LLC in the amount of \$45,000 at 5.5% interest with a ten-year amortization and a term of seven years and a third security position in real estate through a Mortgage and a UCC Financing Statement on pizza ovens
d. Writing off the balance of the COVID Business Assistance Loan to Somali Bride Consultant in the amount of \$2,398.88
e. Revising the 2024 Budget relative to the income and expenses related to the Elevate Community Business Academy (see attached)
- Receive: Joint Operations Board/Committee/Subcommittee Minutes
1. Joint Operations Board 10/19, 11/9 and 12/14/2023
2. Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development 9/21, 11/27 and 12/21/2023
a. Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee 7/11, 9/11 and 11/13/2023
3. Broadband and Advanced Technology 10/2, 11/6 and 12/4/2023
4. Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment 9/13/2023

5. Finance 9/12/2023

6. Marketing and Public Relations 11/27 and 12/11/2023

All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Office Location Discussion. Aaron Backman informed the board that Leslie Valiant, Willmar City Administrator, approached him to possibly co-locate in a new Willmar City Hall. He has requested more information and a possible cost. Backman indicated he would attempt a short-term lease with the current landlord if City Hall was decided as a location. The EDC is currently paying \$16 per sq. foot. Board members noted the ease of getting to the current location is a positive.

Business Development Manager Position. Backman informed the board that he interacted with nine individuals with six submitting resumes. The Review Committee met Tuesday and reviewed the six resumes and selected three applicants to interview. The Review Committee will conduct interviews the afternoon of January 30.

NEW BUSINESS

Employee Handbook Changes. Backman informed the board that staff received the Earned Sick and Safe Time Employee Notice (ESST) (see attached) relative to the new law enacted by the Minnesota Legislature. The board reviewed the proposed changes to the Employee Handbook (see attached). Discussion was held on the Pregnancy and Parenting Leave and if it should be paid time off. Backman recommended this issue be discussed during the budget process for 2025. Backman noted the ESST notice given to the employees includes the requirement they must notify the Executive Director, in advance, via phone, text, or email of any absence, which he recommends be added to the Employee Handbook.

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Corky Berg, to approve the changes noted on the attached copy of the Employee Handbook, including the addition of the following language as the third paragraph in Section I, Personnel, Section D:

If an employee plans to use earned sick and safe time for an appointment, preventive care or another permissible reason they know of in advance, inform the EDC Executive Director by phone, email or text as far in advance as possible, but at least two days in advance. In situations where an employee cannot provide advance notice, the employee should contact the EDC Executive Director at 320-235-7370, cell or by email as soon as they know they will be unable to work.

All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

ANNUAL MEETING

Joint Operations Board Appointments. Vice Chair Gardner informed the board that the reappointment of Abdulcadir Gaal is needed as his term ended December 31, 2023. Backman indicated Gaal is a City of Willmar representative and is interested in being reappointed.

IT WAS MOVED BY Doug Reese, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to reappoint Abdulcadir Gaal to a three-year term on the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Operations Board effective January 1, 2024. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Backman stated a replacement is needed for Kelly TerWisscha on the Joint Operations Board. TerWisscha has served three full three-year terms and cannot be reappointed. Veronica Garcia has expressed interest in serving on the Joint Operations Board and submitted an application (see attached). Backman spoke with County Commissioner Duane Anderson, who was supportive of the appointment.

IT WAS MOVED BY Corky Berg, SECONDED BY Roger Imdieke, to appoint Veronica Garcia to a three-year term on the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Operations Board effective January 1, 2024. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Backman will inform Garcia of her appointment.

Approve 2024 standing committees/subcommittees and reappoint committee members. Backman noted a list of committees, subcommittees and their members was provided to the board (see attached).

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to approve the following standing committees and subcommittees for 2024:

Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development Committee
Ag Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee
Broadband and Advanced Technology Committee
Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment Committee (BRE)
Finance Committee; and
Marketing and Public Relations Committee
and to approve the committee members on the attached list. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Selection of official newspaper. Backman recommended the West Central Tribune, which has been the official newspaper in the past.

IT WAS MOVED BY Doug Reese, SECONDED BY Corky Berg, to select the West Central Tribune as the official newspaper for the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Regular meeting time, date and location. Backman informed the board the current meeting time, date and location are 11:30 a.m. quarterly on the fourth Thursday in January, April, July and October at the EDC Office. Imdieke suggested the meeting time be changed to not include a meal. Following discussion,

IT WAS MOVED BY Vicki Davis, SECONDED BY Corky Berg, to set the regular meeting time, date and location for meetings of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) Joint Powers Board for 11:30 a.m. quarterly on the fourth Thursdays in January, April, July and October at the EDC office or other locations as deemed appropriate. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Election of 2024 Officers. Vice Chair Gardner stated that historically the chair serves two years and the position has alternated every two years between the county and city of Willmar representatives and generally the vice chair has moved into the chair position after two years.

IT WAS MOVED BY Julie Asmus, SECONDED BY Doug Reese, to elect Steve Gardner as chair of the Kandiyohi and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Powers Board. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

IT WAS MOVED BY Doug Reese, SECONDED BY Steve Gardner, to elect Vicki Davis as vice chair of the Kandiyohi and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Powers Board. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Corky Berg, to elect Julie Asmus as secretary of the Kandiyohi and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Powers Board. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to elect Doug Reese as treasurer of the Kandiyohi and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Powers Board. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Appoint Liaison to Joint Operations Board. Chair Gardner stated he has been this board's liaison to the Joint Operations Board this past year.

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Steve Gardner, to appoint Corky Berg as the Joint Powers Board liaison to the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission Joint Operations Board. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

Update Bank Accounts with Current Officers. Chair Gardner indicated as the treasurers have changed for both boards, authorized signers on the bank accounts need to be updated.

IT WAS MOVED BY Vicki Davis, SECONDED BY Doug Reese that the authorized signers on the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission bank accounts be the Joint Powers Board chair, vice chair and treasurer; the Joint Operations Board secretary and treasurer; the Executive Director and Business Development Manager. All others currently named as authorized signers shall be removed. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

REPORTS AND COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS

Economic Development Activity. Backman reported the sale of 13.67 acres to Duinick will be closing soon; he spoke on housing to the League of Women Voters; and hosted bus tours around Willmar for the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities and the Economic Development Association of Minnesota. Another tour will be co-hosted with the Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce for the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development on February 2nd. Backman invited board members to attend this tour followed by the Chamber's Public Policy meeting.

Joint Operations Board Liaison. Backman noted the Joint Operations Board recognized retiring director Kelly TerWisscha with a plaque. TerWisscha served on the board from 2015 to 2023, serving as president from 2019-2021, vice president in 2018 and as treasurer from 2022-2023. He will continue to serve on the EDC's Finance Committee. The officers elected for 2024 are Jesse Gislason, president; Les Heitke, vice president; Mary Warszynski, secretary and Noah Hultgren, treasurer.

Elevate Community Business Academy. Backman noted in the Consent Agenda that the board ratified an agreement with Sarah Swedburg to work with the Elevate program through May 31, 2024 and ratified changes to the 2024 budget. Informational sessions are being held in January and February. Classes will begin in February and will be held in both English and Spanish. There continues to be good interest in the program.

Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development. No report.

Broadband and Advanced Technology. Grant applications were submitted to the Office of Broadband Development and the committee is waiting to hear on any awards.

BRE/Childcare. Tanna Stucky reported 34 family providers received grant funds, including the opening of 8 new providers; 7 childcare centers received funds for expansion or renovation resulting in the anticipated creation of approximately 263 new slots. Stucky and Backman toured a proposed new center in Atwater. Stucky is working with a mentorship program for providers and hosted an event in December where the Employee Assistance Program was introduced.

Marketing and Public Relations. Kelsey Olson reported she continues to work on updating the EDC's website. Additional items on which she has been working can be found in her written report (see attached).

Finance. No report.

Resignation by Executive Director. Backman submitted his resignation as Executive Director of the EDC (see attached) effective July 31, 2024 and stated he will use his accrued vacation in July. Backman recommends the EDC use of a public sector executive search firm for his replacement, which was done when he was hired. Backman highlighted accomplishments since his hiring in 2015 as noted in his letter. The board extended their thanks to Backman for serving as the EDC's Executive Director and wished him well in his retirement.

IT WAS MOVED BY Corky Berg, SECONDED BY Doug Reese, to accept, with regrets, the resignation of Aaron Backman as Executive Director of the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission effective July 31, 2024 and approve him using his accrued vacation in July. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

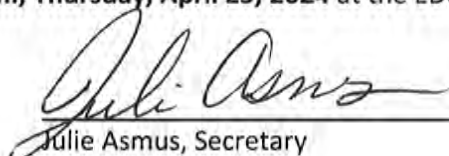
Birkeland explained the process done when Backman was hired. Following discussion,

IT WAS MOVED BY Roger Imdieke, SECONDED BY Vicki Davis, to send a Request for Proposal to executive search firms for the Executive Director position with proposals to be returned within two to three weeks. All present voted unanimously in favor by roll call.

A special meeting will be held once proposals are received and a Review Committee appointed.

ADJOURNMENT—There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:13 p.m.

NEXT MEETING—The next regular meeting is **11:30 a.m., Thursday, April 25, 2024** at the EDC office and via Zoom video conference.


Julie Asmus, Secretary

APPROVED: 4/25/2024:


Steve Gardner, Chairperson

Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission
Agreement for Services for
Elevate Community Business Academy
January 1, 2024 – May 31, 2024

THIS AGREEMENT is made and entered into this 27 day of December, 2023 between Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (hereafter "EDC"), P.O. Box 1783, Willmar, MN 56201 and Sarah J. Swedburg (hereafter "Contractor"), 704 4th Street SE, 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 Elevate Community Business Academy (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 and implementation, oversight and coaching of teachers, grant writing and management, 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 January 1, 2024 and be completed on or before May 31, 2024. 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 May 31, 2024. 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 \$9,900 (approximately 132 hours) at a rate of \$75.00/hour for each hour completed toward the Project. In addition, Contractor may request reimbursement of up to \$500 for travel/mileage and \$500 for supplies and materials. The total compensation shall not exceed \$10,900 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 January 31, 2024. A final invoice covering remaining costs shall be submitted by Contractor within 15 days of the contract end date of May 31, 2024. 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 65.5 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 or coaching 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 A. Backman

Aaron Backman
Executive Director

Date: December 27th, 2023

AN INDIVIDUAL

Sarah J. Swedburg

Sarah J. Swedburg
Independent Contractor

Date: December 27, 2023

Exhibit A
Scope of Work
Elevate Community Business Academy (CBA)

The following outlines tasks and the estimated timeframe for the work to be completed during this Agreement:

Overall Scope of Work

- Management of Spring 2024 English and Spanish Elevate CBA Cohorts:
 - Four (4) Information Sessions
 - Coordination of student applications and communication to selected students
 - Oversight and coaching of Lead Instructors and Classroom Monitors
 - Support for any site needs
 - Scheduling of guests and volunteers
 - Emergency substitute, if needed
 - Event planning for Spring 2024 Bilingual (English/Spanish) Graduation Ceremony, in partnership with EDC staff
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Small Business Assistance Partnership Grant Management, including, but not limited to required reporting and budget oversight
- Coordination with Executive Pulse for CRM custom reporting design and implementation
- Coordination with Rising Tide Capital and Southwest Initiative Foundation for continued partnership and Business Assistant Services (BAS) design and implementation, including but not limited to education and networking opportunities for Elevate Alumni
- Coordination with Ten17 Media for Podcast creation, planning, and launch

Approximate Timeline of Work

	January	February	March	April	May
Info Sessions					
Application Review/Communication					
Coaching					
Guest Scheduling					
Graduation Planning					
Grant Management				*	
Executive Pulse Custom Reports					
BAS Design					
Podcast Planning					

*First Quarter Grant Report Due



2024 Budget		
REVENUES		
County Tax Levy	\$ 608,056	
Fiscal Agent		
Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities student loan program	\$ 22,000	
Grants		
McKnight Foundation	\$ 28,900	
MN Department of Agriculture	\$ 5,000	
MN Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED)		
Child Care Grant	\$ 5,000	
Elevate Community Business Academy	\$ 119,080	
Other Grants	\$ 8,000	
Total Grants	\$ 165,980	\$ 137,080
Insurance dividends	\$ 400	
Interest on investments		
Concorde Bank (Revolving Loan Fund savings account)	\$ 950	
Heritage Bank savings account	\$ 150	
Lake Region Bank - Microenterprise Loan account	\$ 900	
United Prairie Bank \$109,619.23 CD matures October	\$ 250	
Total Interest on investments	\$ 2,250	
Loans		
Microenterprise Loan Fund repayments interest	\$ 700	
Microenterprise Loan Fund closing fees	\$ 200	
Revolving Loan Fund closing fees	\$ 900	
Revolving Loan Fund repayments interest	\$ 6,500	
Total Loans	\$ 8,300	
Other Income		
Elevate Business Academy - Corporate Donations	\$ 10,000	\$ 3,000
Reimbursements, sponsorships and in-kind contributions		
Engineering and Professional Service Reimbursement	\$ 7,000	
Farmtastic	\$ 5,500	
Workforce Events	\$ 3,500	
SWIF Contributions		
Elevate Community Business Academy	\$ 10,000	\$ 41,490
Total Other Income	\$ 36,000	\$ 60,490
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 842,986	\$ 838,176



2024 Budget		
EXPENSES		
Elevate Community Business Academy		
Advertising	\$ 500	
Copying	\$ 200	
Equipment	\$ —	
Graduation Ceremony		
— Food	\$ 6,100	
— Rental of Facility	\$ 600	
— Speaker	\$ 700	
— Supplies	\$ 600	
Total Graduation Ceremony	\$ 8,000	
Marketing	\$ 1,000	
Mileage/Travel	\$ 500	\$ 1,600
Printing	\$ 300	
Professional Services		
Consultants		\$ 129,270
General Administrative Services	\$ 1,800	\$ 4,100
Program Instructors (3 classes @ 2 instructors each)	\$ 25,000	
Personnel		\$ 5,700
Technical Assistance Contractors	\$ 5,000	
Translation Services	\$ 500	
Total Professional Services	\$ 32,300	
Rental of Facilities for classes	\$ 3,000	
Supplies & Curriculum	\$ 1,500	\$ 22,900
Website	\$ 1,500	
Other	\$ 100	
Total Elevate Community Business Academy	\$ 48,900	\$ 163,570

Earned sick and safe time employee notice

Employees in Minnesota are entitled to earned sick and safe time, a form of paid leave. Employees must accrue at least one hour of earned sick and safe time for every 30 hours they work, up to a maximum of 48 hours per year. The hourly rate of Earned Sick and Safe Leave (ESSL) is the same hourly rate an employee earns from employment with the EDC. This specific leave applies to all employees (including temporary and part-time employees) performing work for at least 80 hours in a year for the EDC. Please refer to the EDC's Employee Handbook for specific details regarding ESSL.

The earned sick and safe time hours the employee has available, as well as those that have been used in the most recent pay period, must be indicated on the employee's earnings statement that they receive at the end of each pay period. ESSL must be paid at the same hourly rate employees earn from employment. Employees are not required to seek or find a replacement for their shift to use ESSL. They may use ESSL for all or part of a shift, depending on their need.

ESSL can be used for:

- an employee's mental or physical illness, treatment or preventive care;
- the mental or physical illness, treatment or preventive care of an employee's family member;
- absence due to domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking of an employee or their family member;
- closure of an employee's workplace due to weather or public emergency or closure of their family member's school or care facility due to weather or public emergency; and
- when determined by a health authority or health care professional that an employee or their family member is at risk of infecting others with a communicable disease.

Notifying employer, documentation

An employer can require their employees to provide up to seven days of advance notice when possible (for example, when an employee has a medical appointment scheduled in advance) before using ESSL. An employer can also require their employees to provide certain documentation regarding the reason for their use of ESSL if they use it for more than three consecutive days.

If an employee plans to use earned sick and safe time for an appointment, preventive care or another permissible reason they know of in advance, inform the EDC Executive Director by phone, email or text as far in advance as possible, but at least two days in advance. In situations where an employee cannot provide advance notice, the employee should contact the EDC Executive Director at 320-235-7370, cell 320-894-5284 or by email at aaron@kandiyohi.com as soon as they know they will be unable to work.

Retaliation, right to file complaint

It is against the law for an employer to retaliate, or to take negative action, against an employee for using or requesting earned sick and safe time or otherwise exercising their earned sick and safe time rights under the law. If an employee believes they have been retaliated against or improperly denied earned sick and safe

time, they can file a complaint with the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. They can also file a civil action in court for earned sick and safe time violations.

For more information

Contact the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry’s Labor Standards Division at 651-284-5075 or dli.laborstandards@state.mn.us or visit the department’s earned sick and safe time webpage at dli.mn.gov/sick-leave.

This document contains important information about your employment. Check the box at the left to receive this information in this language.

Spanish/Español	Este documento contiene información importante sobre su empleo. Marque la casilla a la izquierda para recibir esta información en este idioma.
Hmong/Hmoob	Daim ntawv no muaj cov xov tseem ceeb hais txog thaum koj ua hauj lwm. Khij lub npauv ntawm sab laug yog koj xav tau cov xov tseem ceeb no txhais ua lus Hmoob.
Vietnamese/Việt ngữ	Tài liệu này chứa thông tin quan trọng về việc làm của quý vị. Đánh dấu vào ô bên trái để nhận thông tin này bằng Việt ngữ.
Simp. Chinese/简体中文	本文件包含与您的雇用相关的重要信息。勾选左边的方框将接收以这种语言提供的信息。
Russian/русский	Данный документ содержит важную информацию о вашем трудоустройстве. Отметьте галочкой квадрат слева для получения этой информации на данном языке.
Somali/Soomaali	Dokumentigan waxaa ku qoran macluumaad muhiim ah oo ku saabsan shaqadaada. Calaamadi sanduudkan haddii aad rabto inaad macluumaadkan ku hesho luqaddan.
Laotian/ລາວ	ເອກະສານນີ້ມີຂໍ້ມູນທີ່ສໍາຄັນກ່ຽວກັບການຈ້າງງານຂອງທ່ານ. ກວດເບິ່ງກ່ອງທີ່ຊື່ເບື້ອງຊ້າຍເພື່ອຮັບຂໍ້ມູນນີ້ໃນພາສາລາວ.
Korean/한국어	이 문서에는 귀하의 고용 형태에 관련된 중요한 정보가 담겨있습니다. 이 언어로 이 정보를 받기를 원하시면 왼쪽 상자에 체크하여 주세요.
Tagalog/Tagalog	Ang dokumentong ito ay nagtataglay ng mahalagang impormasyon tungkol sa iyong pagtatrabaho. Lagyan ng tsek ang kahon sa kaliwa upang matanggap ang impormasyong ito sa wikang ito.
Oromo/Oromoo	Waraqaan kun waayee hojii keetii odeeffannoo barbaachisoo ta’an qabatee jira. Saaxinnii karaa bitaatti argamu kana irratti mallattoo godhi yoo afaan Kanaan barreeffama argachuu barbaadde.
Amharic/አማርኛ	ይህ ደብዳቤ ለአብዛኛው ነገሮች በሚመለከት አስፈላጊ መረጃ የያዘ ነው። ይህንን ደብዳቤ በስተቃላት በኩል ባለው ቋንቋ ተተርጉሞ እንዲሰጥኝ ከፈለጉ በዛው በስተቃላት በኩል ባለው ባጥን ውስጥ ምልክት ያድርጉ።
Karen/ကရင်စာ	ဤစာရွက်စာတမ်းသည် အလုပ်အကိုင်ဆိုင်ရာ အကျိုးအမြတ်ဆိုင်ရာ အချက်အလက်များကို ပြောဆိုထားပြီး ဤစာရွက်စာတမ်းကို ရရှိရန်အတွက် ဤစာရွက်စာတမ်း၏ ဝဘ်ဘလောက်ကို ဖတ်ရှုပါ။
Arabic/العربية	يحتوي هذا المستند على معلومات مهمة حول عملك. ضع علامة في المربع على اليمين للحصول على هذه المعلومات في هذه اللغة.



Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

REVISED BY JOINT OPERATIONS BOARD 12/12/2023

ADOPTED BY JOINT POWERS BOARD 1/____/2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
I. PURPOSE AND INTENT	1
II. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY	1
III. EMPLOYER AUTHORITY	2
IV. PERSONNEL	
A. Definitions	
1. Executive Director	2
2. Assistant Director	2
3. Position	2
4. Full-time Employee	2
5. Regular Part-time Employee	2
6. Intermittent Part-time Employee	3
7. Probationary Period	3
8. Hourly Rate of Pay	3
9. General Work Day	3
10. Employer	3
11. Immediate Family	3
12. Payroll Period	3
B. Hours of Work	3
C. Vacation Time	3
D. Sick Leave	4
E. HOLIDAYS	4
F. Leaves	5
1. Military Leave	5
2. Jury Duty	5
G. EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS	5
H. Reimbursement of Travel and Related Expenses Policy	5
1. Approval and Notification of Travel	5
2. Reimbursement Procedures	6
3. Travel Expenses for Spouse, Other Members of Family or Non-EDC Employees	6
4. Liability Insurance/Driver's License	7
5. Violations	7
I. Employee Insurance	7
J. Resignation	7
K. Workers' Compensation	7
L. HARASSMENT	8
1. Policy	8
2. Sexual Harassment	8
3. Complaint Procedure	8
M. GRIEVANCES	9
N. DISCIPLINE	9
O. Alcohol and Drug Policy	9
P. Family and Medical Leave of Absence Policy	10

Q. Dress and Personal Appearance 10

R. CELL PHONE POLICY 10

S. Computer and Electronic Communications Use 10

T. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST. 11

 1. Outside Employment 11

 2. Acceptance of Gifts 11

 3. Use of Confidential Information 12

 4. Use of Property 12

 5. Volunteer Organizations. 12

 6. Review of Potential Conflicts of Interest. 12

 7. Resolution of Conflict of Interest. 13

U. CONFIDENTIALITY 13

**RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF
KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

This Employee Handbook is an important document intended to help you become acquainted with the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC). This Employee Handbook will serve as a guide; it is not the final word in all cases. The contents of this handbook may be changed at any time at the discretion of the EDC boards. Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your receipt and acknowledgment of the handbook.

I have received and read a copy of the Employee Handbook. I understand the policies, rules and the benefits described in it are subject to change at the sole discretion of the EDC at any time. I understand that this handbook replaces all other previous manuals for the EDC.

I understand that should the content be changed in any way, the EDC may require an additional signature from me to indicate that I am aware of and understand any new policies.

Printed Name: _____

Signature _____ Date _____

KANDIYOHI COUNTY AND CITY OF WILLMAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

I. PURPOSE AND INTENT

This handbook is presented as a matter of information only for all Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC) employees. The policies and procedures described in this handbook are not conditions of employment. The language in this handbook is not intended to create a contract (expressed or implied) between the EDC and its employees.

It shall be the responsibility of the EDC's Executive Director to administer the laws and policies set forth by the EDC's Joint Operations Board and Joint Powers Board, or as otherwise set forth in state and federal law. In cases of emergency, the Executive Director shall have the power to act outside the established procedures within the jurisdiction of his/her authority. The EDC's boards reserve the right to modify, revoke, suspend, terminate or change any or all such plans, policies or procedures, in whole or in part, at any time, with or without notice.

In general, all EDC employees are expected to perform their respective duties in a competent and efficient manner. Each employee shall be courteous, tactful and considerate in dealing with the public and co-workers. It shall be understood that each position within the EDC exists for the purpose of providing services to the public. In so doing, each employee shall respect that responsibility and present a neat and clean appearance in conformance with accepted job standards.

These policies shall not be construed to remove, limit or extend the rights and preferences of veterans as established by Minnesota Statutes 197.45 to 197.46. Nor shall these policies be construed to permit or encourage any action or conduct prohibited by the Minnesota Human Rights Act or any other state or federal law relating to equal employment opportunities and the provisions of these acts shall continue to apply to EDC employment generally. Nor shall these policies be construed to affect the rights and obligations of employees and employers under the provisions of the Public Employment Labor Relations Act of 1971, as amended, or the provisions of any contracts or agreements executed pursuant thereto.

II. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

It is the EDC's policy to provide employment opportunities without regard for a person's age, disability, **genetic information (including family medical history)**, race/color (**such as hair texture, skin color or certain facial features**), religion, sex (**including sexual orientation, gender identity or pregnancy**), national origin, veteran status, ~~sexual orientation~~, marital status, military status or any other characteristic protected by state or federal law. The EDC is strongly committed to this policy and believes in the concept and spirit of the law.

The EDC believes in and practices equal opportunity and affirmative action. The Executive Director or their designee serves as the Equal Opportunity Coordinator and has overall responsibility for ensuring compliance with this policy. All employees are responsible for supporting the concept of equal opportunity and affirmative action and assisting the EDC in meeting its objectives.

This policy applies to all areas of employment. All personnel actions and programs, including compensation, benefits, EDC-sponsored training and education will be administered without regard to age, disability, genetic information (including family medical history), race/color (such as hair texture, skin color or certain facial features), religion, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity or pregnancy), national origin, ~~sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran's status, pregnancy,~~ genetic information (including family medical history) or membership in other protected groups.

III. EMPLOYER AUTHORITY

It is recognized that except as expressly stated herein, the EDC shall retain whatever rights and authority necessary to operate and direct the affairs of the EDC in all its various aspects including, but not limited to, the right to direct the working forces; to plan, direct and control all the operations and services of the EDC, to determine the methods, means, organization and number of personnel by which such operations and services are to be conducted; to assign and transfer employees; to schedule working hours and to assign overtime; to determine whether goods or services should be made or purchased or contracted for; to hire, promote, demote, suspend, discipline, discharge or relieve employees due to lack of work or other legitimate reasons; to make and enforce rules and regulations; and to change or eliminate existing methods, equipment or facilities. It is also recognized that the EDC shall retain the authority and prerogative to:

- operate and manage affairs in all respects in accordance with existing and future laws and regulations or appropriate authorities, including EDC personnel policies and work rules;
- maintain the efficiency of the government operations; and
- take whatever actions may be necessary to carry out the missions of the EDC in emergencies.

IV. PERSONNEL

A. DEFINITIONS.

1. **Executive Director.** The Executive Director administers the day-to-day operations of the EDC.
2. **Assistant Director.** The Assistant Director assists the Executive Director in administering the day-to-day operations of the EDC.
3. **Position** means a group of duties and responsibilities requiring full or part-time employment.
4. **Full-time Employee** means an employee who works at least 32 or more hours per week on a regular basis.
5. **Regular Part-time Employee** means an employee who works less than 29 hours per week and is regularly scheduled a minimum of 16 hours.

6. **Intermittent Part-time Employee** means an employee who works less than an average of 16 hours per week and whose scheduled number of hours to work vary from week to week, depending on work assignments, availability and client's need, or an employee who works on a seasonal basis.
7. **Probationary Period** means a 90-day working period during which the employee is required to demonstrate his/her fitness for the position.
 - a. Any employee with probationary status may be terminated at any time during the probationary period.
 - b. Vacation and sick leave shall be earned by the new employee during the probationary period.
8. **Hourly Rate of Pay** means an employee's annual salary divided by 2080 hours (if 40 hours per week) or 1664 hours (if 32 hours per week) and rounded to the nearest whole cent.
9. **General Work Day** means a work period of time from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. that includes a one-hour lunch period, Monday through Friday.
10. **Employer** means the Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission (EDC).
11. **Immediate Family.** The employee's immediate family is defined as father or father-in-law, grandfather, mother or mother-in-law, grandmother, sister or sister-in-law, brother or brother-in-law, spouse, children of either husband or wife, stepchildren or stepparents, or a member of the employee's own immediate household.
12. **Payroll Period** means a semimonthly schedule with paydays on the 15th and last working day of each month.

B. **HOURS OF WORK.** It is acknowledged that staff will occasionally be called upon to work more hours than the normal work day. It is therefore acknowledged and expected that they may reduce the hours worked on subsequent days at their discretion. This will not affect vacation or sick time.

C. **VACATION TIME.**

1. The Executive Director and Assistant Director's vacation time shall be set out in an Employment Agreement.
2. Full-time employees shall accumulate vacation on the following basis:
 - a. Employees with less than 3 years of full-time employment shall earn vacation at the rate of 3.67 hours per pay period (semimonthly) (88 hours per year).
 - b. Employees with more than 3 years, but less than 5 years of full-time employment shall earn vacation at the rate of 4.33 hours per pay period (semimonthly) (104 hours per year).

- c. Employees with more than 5 years, but less than 7 years of service, shall earn vacation at the rate of 5 hours per pay period (semimonthly) (120 hours per year).
- d. Employees with 7 years or more of service, shall earn vacation at the rate of 5.67 hours per pay period (semimonthly) (136 hours per year).

Changes in the rate of accumulation shall be effective on January 1 of each calendar year.

- 3. Accumulated vacation time for employees shall not exceed 160 hours.
- 4. Employees may be allowed up to three working days with pay, per incident, as funeral leave for a death in the immediate family. Consideration shall be given by the Executive Director to closeness of kin and distance of travel. Vacation hours are to be used for attending funerals of persons other than immediate family. **[Moved from being under Section D, ESSL, as paragraph 3, to be under Section C, Vacation Time as it relates to vacation hours.]**
- 45. Any employee who is separated from EDC employment by layoff, resignation, leave of absence or death shall be paid for the working hours of unused vacation leave accumulated to his/her credit. The payment shall be computed by multiplying the employee's current hourly rate of pay by the number of accumulated vacation hours. Payment of vacation time shall not exceed 160 hours.

D. EARNED SICK AND SAFE LEAVE (ESSL). "Earned Sick and Safe Leave" is authorized absence from work with pay, granted to qualified full-time and part-time employees. ESSL is a privilege, not a right.

Employees are to use this paid leave only when they are unable to work for medical reasons and under the conditions explained in paragraph 5 below. ESSL does not accrue during an unpaid leave of absence.

ESSL is paid time off earned at one hour of ESSL for every 30 hours worked by an employee, up to a maximum of 48 hours of sick and safe leave per year. The hourly rate of ESSL is the same hourly rate an employee earns from employment with the EDC. This specific leave applies to all employees (including temporary and part-time employees) performing work for at least 80 hours in a year for the EDC.

- 1. The Executive Director and Assistant Director's sick pay shall be set out in an Employment Agreement.
- 22. Full-time employees shall be granted 4 hours of ~~ESSL sick leave~~ with pay for each pay period of service. ~~ESSL Sick leave~~ not used shall be carried forward from one year to the next year up to a maximum accumulation of 192 hours.
- 3. Part-time employees will earn one hour of ESSL for every 30 hours worked up to a maximum of 48 hours of ESSL per year. Part-time employees are eligible to carry over accrued but unused ESSL into the following year, but the total of ESSL carry-over hours shall not exceed 80 hours.
- 3. ~~Employees may be allowed up to three working days with pay, per incident, as funeral leave for a death in the immediate family. Consideration shall be given by the Executive Director to~~

~~closeness of kin and distance of travel. Vacation hours are to be used for attending funerals of persons other than immediate family.~~

5. Employees may use accrued earned ESSL for the following reasons as outlined in Minn. Stat. § 181.9447, subd. 1:
 - a. the employee's:
 - i. mental or physical illness, injury or other health condition;
 - ii. need for medical diagnosis, care, or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or health condition; or
 - iii. need for preventive medical or health care;
 - b. care of a family member:
 - i. with a mental or physical illness, injury or other health condition;
 - ii. who needs medical diagnosis, care or treatment of a mental or physical illness, injury or other health condition;
 - iii. who needs preventive medical or care;
 - c. absence due to domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking of the employee or employee's family member, provided the absence is to:
 - i. seek medical attention related to physical or psychological injury or disability caused by domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking;
 - ii. obtain services from a victim services organization;
 - iii. obtain psychological or other counseling;
 - iv. seek relocation or take steps to secure an existing home due to domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking; or
 - v. seek legal advice or take legal action, including preparing for or participating in any civil or criminal legal proceeding related to or resulting from domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking;
 - d. closure of the employee's place of business due to weather or other public emergency or an employee's need to care for a family member whose school or place of care has been closed due to weather or other public emergency;
 - e. the employee's inability to work or telework because the employee is: (1) prohibited from working by the employer due to health concerns related to the potential transmission of a communicable illness related to a public emergency; or (ii) seeking or awaiting the results of a diagnostic test for, or a medical diagnosis of, a communicable disease related to a public emergency and such employee has been exposed to a communicable disease or the employee's employer has requested a test or diagnosis; and
 - f. when it has been determined by the health authorities having jurisdiction or by a health care professional that the presence of the employee or family member of the employee in the community would jeopardize the health of others because of the exposure of the employee or family member of the employee to a communicable disease, whether or not the employee or family member has actually contracted the communicable disease.

When an employee uses earned sick leave for more than three consecutive days, the EDC may require reasonable documentation that the earned sick and safe time is covered.

6. Employees may use earned ESSL for the following family members:
 - a. their child, including foster child, adult child, legal ward, child for whom the employee is legal guardian or child to whom the employee stands or stood in loco parentis (in place of a parent);
 - b. their spouse or registered domestic partner;
 - c. their sibling, step-sibling or foster sibling;
 - d. their biological, adoptive or foster parent, stepparent or a person who stood in loco parentis (in place of a parent) when the employee was a minor child;
 - e. their grandchild, foster grandchild or step-grandchild;
 - f. their grandparent or step-grandparent;
 - g. a child of a sibling of the employee;
 - h. a sibling of the parents of the employee;
 - i. a child-in-law or sibling-in-law;
 - j. any of the family members (a through i above) of an employee's spouse or registered domestic partner;
 - k. any other individual related by blood or whose close association with the employee is the equivalent of a family relationship; and
 - l. up to one individual annually designated by the employee.

47. Any employee who is separated from EDC employment by layoff, resignation, leave of absence or death shall be paid for the working hours of unused sick leave accumulated to his/her credit. The payment shall be computed by multiplying the employee's current hourly rate of pay by the number of accumulated sick leave hours. Payment of sick leave time shall not exceed 160 hours.

E. **HOLIDAYS.** Full-time and regular part-time employees shall be entitled to the following holidays with pay:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| New Year's Day | Labor Day |
| Martin Luther King Day | Veteran's Day |
| President's Day | Thanksgiving Day |
| Memorial Day | Day after Thanksgiving Day |
| Juneteenth (June 19) | Christmas Day |
| Independence Day | |

Holidays falling on Saturday shall be celebrated on the preceding Friday and holidays falling on Sunday shall be celebrated on the following Monday. The last four hours of the Christmas Eve work day shall also be considered a holiday when Christmas Eve falls on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.

F. **LEAVES.**

1. **Military Leave.** Employees shall be entitled to a maximum of 120 working hours off with pay during the calendar year for reserves, National Guard or military duty as outlined in Minn. Stat. § 192.26 or applicable federal law. An employee who engages in active service in time of war or other emergency shall be granted a leave of absence without pay according to Minn. Stat. § 192.261 or applicable federal law.
2. **Jury Duty.** Employees shall be granted time off, with pay, to serve on a jury pursuant to Minnesota Statutes or applicable federal law. When not impaneled for actual service and only on call, the employee shall report to work. Any funds received by the employee for jury duty shall be turned over to the EDC.
3. **Pregnancy and Parenting Leave.** All employees are entitled to take an unpaid leave of absence under the Pregnancy and Parenting Leave Act of Minnesota. Female employees for prenatal care, or incapacity due to pregnancy, childbirth, or related health conditions, as well as a biological or adoptive parent in conjunction with after the birth or adoption of a child is eligible for up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave and must begin within 12 months of the birth or adoption of the child. In the case where the child must remain in the hospital longer than the mother, the leave must begin within 12 months after the child leaves the hospital. The employee should provide reasonable notice, which is at least 30 days. If the leave must be taken in less than 30 days, the employee should give as much notice as practicable.

Employees are required to use accrued leave (i.e., sick leave, vacation leave, etc.) during Parenting Leave. If the employee has any FMLA eligibility remaining at the time this leave commences, this leave will also count as FMLA leave. The two leaves will run concurrently. The employee is entitled to return to work in the same position and at the same rate of pay the employee was receiving prior to commencement of the leave. Group insurance coverage will remain available while the employee is on leave pursuant to the Pregnancy and Parenting Leave Act, but the employee will be responsible for the entire premium unless otherwise provided in this policy (i.e., where leave is also FMLA qualifying). For employees on an FMLA absence as well, the employer contributions toward insurance benefits will continue during the FMLA leave absence.

The EDC will not discharge, discipline, penalize, interfere with, or otherwise retaliate or discriminate against an employee for asserting parental leave rights and remedies.

4. **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY.** The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, as amended, entitles eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period for specified family, medical and military-related reasons. [moved from separate paragraph P]

G. EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS. The Executive Director and Assistant Director shall enter into an Employment Agreement that shall automatically be renewed from year to year unless modified by agreement of the Executive Director or Assistant Director, respectively, and the EDCJP/EDCOB.

H. REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL AND RELATED EXPENSES POLICY. It is intended that this policy conform to all Minnesota Statutes, including §§ 471.38, 471.661, 471.96(1) and 471.97 and IRS rules governing expenses incurred by employees in the conduct of EDC business. The Executive Director shall be responsible for reviewing expense reports to assure accuracy.

1. Approval and Notification of Travel.

- a. In-State and Local Travel. The Executive Director must approve all in-state and/or local travel for EDC personnel. The Executive Director is responsible for assuring that funds are available to pay for the attendance of all conferences and seminars s/he approves. Out-of-state travel must be approved according to the policy below.
- b. Out-of-State Travel. This applies to all EDC employees and supercedes any other travel policy regarding out-of-state travel. All out-of-state travel requests must be presented to the Executive Director and then the EDCOB for consideration and approval prior to the planned date(s) of travel. The Executive Director shall consider each request and evaluate the appropriateness of out-of-state travel based on the following guidelines:
 - (1) The cost of the conference, institute, training program and related travel must be within the annual travel expense budget approved by the EDCOB. Exceptions may be made with the approval of the EDCOB.
 - (2) The conference/training topic and information obtained must be to the benefit of the EDC and Kandiyohi County. Benefits to the EDC/Kandiyohi County may include, but are not limited to, improvements to the operation of the EDC; communication with state and federal offices; cooperation or communication with other local government jurisdictions; meetings requiring the presence of an EDC volunteer or employee; representation of the EDC on national, state or inter-jurisdictional committees; and professional development.

2. Reimbursement Procedures. EDC personnel traveling in the conduct of authorized EDC business shall adhere to the following:

- a. Location of Conference. When a conference or seminar is scheduled at several locations, the location in or nearest Kandiyohi County should be selected.
- b. Mileage. When a personal auto is used for official EDC business, mileage will be reimbursed at the IRS allowable rate. Odometer readings must be provided. In the event more than one employee shares the use of an automobile for such travel, only one employee shall be reimbursed at the approved rate. Mileage shall be paid on the most reasonable direct route.

- c. Use of Air Transportation. Any EDC employee traveling on EDC business and utilizing air transportation shall be reimbursed for travel expense by coach airfare rates when such accommodations are available.
 - d. Lodging. Lodging will be paid for the single accommodation rate only when it is essential to attending an official economic development meeting or conference. If personnel goes early or stays following the conference for personal reasons, this is not a reimbursable expense. Provide receipts.
 - e. Meals. Meals not provided with a conference registration will be reimbursed for out-of-county meetings only at the actual cost. Meals will be reimbursed **only** when they are associated with overnight travel trips or are part of a registration fee and are for EDC business. Receipts for all meals must be submitted with the reimbursement request. Expenses for alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable.
 - f. Parking or Ground Transportation. Employees using private automobiles shall be reimbursed on an actual expense basis for parking while on official EDC business. Provide receipts.
 - g. Taxi/Bus. Payment reimbursement will be authorized for taxi or bus service when on EDC business and no private vehicle is available.
 - h. Car Rental. Employees may only use a rental vehicle at the EDC's expense when authorized or in an emergency situation. When using rental vehicles, the lowest reasonable rate shall be used.
3. **Travel Expenses for Spouse, Other Members of Family or Non-EDC Employees.** If an employee's spouse, family member or any non-EDC employee accompanies an EDC employee on a business trip, any portion of the expenses attributable to the spouse, family member or non-EDC employee's travel, meals, lodging, etc., are not reimbursable under any circumstances. If a spouse, family member or non-EDC employee accompanies an employee on a business trip, the reimbursable business expense for transportation and lodging is the single rate cost of accommodations for the employee.
4. **Liability Insurance/Driver's License.** Employees shall not drive vehicles on EDC business without a valid Minnesota driver's license of the appropriate classification. Employees are required to have at least the legal minimum liability limits as set in effect on all vehicles used for EDC purposes or while performing EDC business. The EDC may at any time require proof of such insurance.
5. **Violations.** Any violation of this section shall subject the employee to disciplinary actions, up to and including discharge, as set forth in these policies.
- I. **EMPLOYEE INSURANCE.**
- 1. Employees working 32 hours or more per week shall be provided group medical insurance. The EDC will pay 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.

2. Employees who retire before age 65, or employees who retire at age 65 or older, may continue under the group health coverage by paying the total cost for the monthly coverage in advance. An employee on an approved leave of absence may continue his/her group health coverage by paying the total cost of insurance in advance.

J. RESIGNATION.

1. An employee may resign in good standing by tendering his/her resignation in writing. Employees are encouraged to give at least 30 calendar days prior to the effective date and at least three weeks is required. Failure to comply with the three-week notice requirement may result in the forfeiting of all accumulated fringe benefits due the employee and normally otherwise paid to the employee as severance pay, except in cases of emergency or unusual circumstances.
2. Absence from work for three consecutive days without notification may constitute a resignation.

K. WORKERS' COMPENSATION. If you become ill or are injured on the job, you must contact the Executive Director or Assistant Director immediately. Failure to report any accident, illness or injury could result in disciplinary action. The employee shall receive workers' compensation benefits as provided by law as it applies. The employee's regular pay shall be reduced by an equal number of hours. Under no circumstances shall the Executive Director or Assistant Director submit a "First Report of Injury" to the insurance company on his/her own behalf or sign the report on behalf of the EDC.

L. HARASSMENT.

1. **Policy.** It is the EDCJP/EDCOB's policy that all employees have a right to work in an environment free from harassment—whether that harassment is based on age, disability, **genetic information (including family medical history)**, race/color (**such as hair texture, skin color or certain facial features**), religion, sex (**including sexual orientation, gender identity or pregnancy**), national origin, veteran status, ~~sexual orientation~~, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, or membership in other protected groups. The policy prohibits harassment of its employees in any form—by supervisors, coworkers, suppliers or customers.
2. **Sexual Harassment.** Sexual harassment, particularly, is a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is against our policy for any employee to sexually harass another employee by:
 - a. Making unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature a condition of the employee's employment;
 - b. Making submission to or rejection of such conduct the basis for employment decisions affecting the employee; or
 - c. Creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment by such conduct.

Sexual harassment refers to behavior which is not welcome, which is personally offensive, which fails to respect the rights of others and which interferes with an employee's work performance. Sexual harassment may take many forms including, but not limited to, the following:

- *Verbal*: sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual propositions and threats.
- *Non-verbal*: sexual suggestive objects or pictures, graphic commentaries, suggestive or insulting sounds, leering, whistling or obscene gestures; or
- *Physical*: unwanted physical contact, including touching, pinching, brushing against the body, coerced sexual contact and assault.

Other harassing conduct in the workplace, whether physical or verbal, committed by supervisors or others is also prohibited. This includes slurs, jokes or degrading comments concerning sex, age, race, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or membership in other protected groups; repeated offensive sexual flirtation, advances or propositions; continual or repeated abuse of a sexual nature; graphic verbal comments about an individual's body; and a display in the workplace of sexually suggestive object or pictures.

3. **Complaint Procedure.** Employees who believe they have been the victim of offensive conduct of a sexual nature, sexual harassment or harassment or bias based on race, creed, color, national original, gender, religion, disability, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, or sexual orientation by an employee, agent, official, commissioner or other elected official of the EDC, or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute such harassment or bias toward an employee, official or member of the public seeking or receiving services from the EDC, should report the alleged conduct immediately to the president of the EDCOB or any member of the EDCOB or EDCJP. All complaints will be handled in a timely and confidential manner. Information regarding the complaint will not be released to third parties or persons within the EDCJP/EDCOB who are not involved with the investigation. This is to protect the confidentiality of the employee who complains, to encourage the reporting of incidents of harassment, and to protect the reputation of any employee wrongfully charged with harassment. An investigation of the complaint will normally include an interview of the persons involved and any named or apparent witnesses. The employees involved in the investigation process are expected to fully cooperate or be subject to disciplinary action. Employees or other persons participating in the investigation will be free of coercion or retaliation. If the investigation reveals harassment, prompt and appropriate disciplinary action designed to stop the harassment and prevent its recurrence will be taken.

Whether a particular action or incident is a purely personal, social relationship without a discriminatory employment effect requires a factual determination based on all the facts. We also recognize that false accusations of harassment can have serious effects on innocent individuals. We trust that all EDCJP/EDCOB employees will act responsibly to establish and maintain a working environment free of discrimination for all. We encourage employees to raise questions they may have regarding this policy to the board of directors.

M. **GRIEVANCES.** It shall be the policy of the boards, insofar as possible, to prevent the occurrence of grievances and to deal promptly with those which occur. When any employee has a grievance, it should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director, who will review all relevant circumstances with the employee, consider and examine the causes of the grievance, and attempt to resolve it. If the grievance is not dealt with satisfactorily at that level, the grievance may be carried to the board. All grievances shall be submitted in writing.

N. **DISCIPLINE.** An employee shall be subject to corrective disciplinary action for inadequate performance, as well as abuse or disregard of board rules and policies. Corrective disciplinary action may include an oral warning, a written warning which shall be placed in the employee's personnel file, suspension, demotion and dismissal. In most cases a written warning shall precede dismissal to correct inappropriate behavior; however, each case will be based on its own merits by the board.

When the violation calls for suspension and/or dismissal, such action will be taken only for just cause excluding a probationary dismissal. The established grievance procedure is available to those employees who feel that they have been unjustly disciplined.

O. **ALCOHOL AND DRUG POLICY.** The EDC is committed to a drug-free workplace. Employees with identified substance abuse problems will be required to seek treatment and rehabilitation. Employees suspected of possessing or distributing drugs will be reported to the proper law enforcement authorities. Should an employee be in possession of any illegal, controlled substance, that employee will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

“Drug” means a controlled substance as defined in Minn. Stat. § 152.01, subd. 4, but does not include marijuana, tetrahydrocannabinols, cannabis flower as defined in Minn. Stat. § 342.01, subd. 16, cannabis products as defined in Minn. Stat. § 342.01, subd. 20, lower-potency hemp edibles as defined in Minn. Stat. § 342.01, subd. 50, and hemp-derived consumer products as defined in Minn. Stat. § 342.01, subd. 37.

P. ~~**FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY.** The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, as amended, entitles eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period for specified family, medical and military-related reasons.~~

P. **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS TO AN EMPLOYEE FOR HEALTH CONDITIONS RELATING TO PREGNANCY.** The EDC will attempt to provide a female employee who requests reasonable accommodation with the following for her health conditions related to her pregnancy or childbirth without advice of a licensed health care provider or certified doula:

1. More frequent restroom, food and water breaks;
2. Seating; and/or
3. Limits on lifting over 20 pounds.

Additionally, the EDC must provide reasonable accommodations including, but not limited to, temporary leaves of absence, modification in work schedule or job assignments, seating, more frequent or longer break periods and limits to heavy lifting to an employee for health conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth upon request, with the advice of a licensed health care provider or certified doula, unless the EDC demonstrates the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the EDC's

business. In accordance with state law, no employee is required to take a leave of absence for a pregnancy nor accept a pregnancy accommodation.

An employer shall not discharge, discipline, penalize, interfere with, or otherwise retaliate or discriminate against an employee for asserting reasonable accommodations pregnancy rights or remedies.

Q. DRESS AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

1. Employees are expected to maintain an appropriate appearance that is businesslike, neat and clean.
 - a. Apparel. Generally, employees should wear appropriate, clean, pressed business attire. The EDC recognizes the importance of individually held religious beliefs to persons within its workforce and will reasonably accommodate a staff member's religious beliefs in terms of workplace attire unless the accommodation creates an undue hardship.
 - b. Hair. ~~Hair should be clean, combed and neatly trimmed or arranged. This pertains to sideburns, moustaches and beards. Shaggy, unkempt hair is not permissible.~~
 - c. Personal hygiene. Good personal hygiene habits must be maintained and the use of too much perfume/cologne that could be distracting or irritating to others is discouraged.
2. The Executive Director or Assistant Director will enforce this policy and address any violation on an individual basis. Employees who are sent home due to lack of adherence to this policy, will do so on their own time and repeated violations of this policy will be cause for disciplinary action.

R. CELL PHONE POLICY.

1. The Executive Director and the Assistant Director are each provided a monthly cell phone and data plan and if usage exceeds the monthly plan due to personal usage, the personal minutes will be reimbursed to the EDC.
2. SCORE will be provided a monthly plan and if usage exceeds the monthly plan due to personal usage, the personal minutes will be reimbursed to the EDC.
3. Other employees may be provided a monthly plan at the discretion of the Executive Director and if usage exceeds the monthly plan due to personal usage, the personal minutes will be reimbursed to the EDC.

S. COMPUTER AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS USE. The EDC strives to provide accurate and timely information and access to internet, email and all other electronic methods of communication have been provided to employees for the benefit of the public. Using these methods of communication should be done so in a professional manner and in accordance with the laws regarding public information, data practices and per EDC policy.

Please note that any time, any use of fraudulent, harassing, obscene, pornographic or discriminatory messages, sites or other forms of electronic communication are strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

No messages with derogatory or inflammatory remarks about an individual's or group's age, disability, **genetic information (including family medical history)**, race/color (such as hair texture, skin color or certain facial features), religion, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity or pregnancy), national origin, religion, veteran's status, pregnancy or membership in other protected groups will be tolerated.

To ensure that all EDC employees are responsible, productive computer and network users, who are protecting the EDC's public image, the EDC adopts and adheres to Kandiyohi County's established policies and guidelines for computer, network, email, password and other electronic communication use (see copy on file).

By using EDC-owned equipment, software and data, as well as using EDC e-mail addresses or representing themselves as an EDC employee through the means of electronic communications, each employee signifies that (s)he understands the policies and guidelines provided to them and agrees to abide by all parts of the policies. Further, each employee who uses EDC-owned equipment or EDC email addresses understands and agrees that violations of the policies and guidelines may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

T. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST. Employees shall avoid real or apparent organizational conflicts of interest. No employee shall be an officer, employee, director, shareholder or member of any corporation, firm or association with which the EDC has entered into any operating or lease agreement. This section shall not apply to the deposit of funds of the agency in any bank in which an employee shall have an interest, if the funds are deposited and protected in accordance with M.S.A. § 118A.

In instances other than those covered by the above paragraph, where a board member or employee has a real or apparent conflict of interest, that board member or employee shall declare the conflict of interest for the record and shall abstain from any vote or discussion of the matter.

1. **Outside Employment.** The EDC does not encourage outside employment. However, employees may be permitted to engage in such employment subject to the above conflict of interest policy and the following restrictions:
 - a. The outside employment shall not interfere with the employee's regular EDC duties;
 - b. Outside work is secondary to EDC employment;
 - c. Outside employment shall not require the use of EDC equipment, facilities, material or supplies.
 - d. Outside employment shall not be for any contractor, person or company that has a contract or agreement with the EDC.
2. **Acceptance of Gifts.** EDC employees, in the course of or in relation to their official duties, shall not directly or indirectly receive or agree to receive any payment of expense, compensation,

- gift, reward, gratuity, favor, service or promise of future employment or other future benefit from any source. The acceptance of the following shall not be a violation of this section:
- a. Gifts of nominal value.
 - b. Plaques or similar mementos recognizing individual services in a field of specialty or to a charitable cause.
 - c. Payment of reimbursement expenses for travel or meals in accordance with the EDC's travel and meal policy.
 - d. Honoraria or expenses paid for papers, talks, demonstrations or appearances made by employees on their own time for which they are not compensated by the EDC.
3. **Use of Confidential Information.** Employees shall not use confidential information to further the employee's private interest and shall not accept outside employment or involvement in a business or activity that may require the employee to disclose or use confidential information.
4. **Use of Property.** Employees shall not use or allow the use of EDC time, supplies or EDC owned or leased property and equipment for the employee's private interest or any other use not related to the business of the EDC, except as provided by law.
5. **Volunteer Organizations.** The EDC encourages its employees to become active members of the community by participating in volunteer organizations, such as fire departments, rescue squads, ambulance squads, service clubs and other nonprofit organizations that contribute to the overall good and quality of life in Kandiyohi County.
6. **Review of Potential Conflicts of Interest.** When an employee believes there is a potential for a conflict of interest, it is the employee's duty to have the situation reviewed. A conflict of interest shall be deemed to exist when a review of the situation by the employee and the EDC's Executive Director or Assistant Director results in a determination that any one of the following conditions are present:
- a. The use for private gain or advantage of EDC time, facilities, equipment, supplies, prestige or influence of the EDC employment.
 - b. Receipt by the employee of any money or other things of value, except as allowed by paragraph 2 above, from anyone other than the EDC for the performance of an act which the employee would be required or expected to perform in the regular course of business of EDC employment or as part of his or her duties as an employee.
 - c. Employment by a business that is subject to the direct or indirect control, inspection, review, audit or enforcement by the employee or by the EDC.
 - d. The performance of an act in other than the employee's official capacity that may later be subject directly or indirectly to the control, inspection, review, audit or enforcement by the employee or by the EDC.

7. Resolution of Conflict of Interest.

- a. If the employee or the employee's supervisor determines that conflict of interest exists or that there is a potential conflict of interest, EDC policy must be followed and the employee must cease all activities in violation thereof.
- b. If the employee believes that there is an unfair determination of a conflict of interest, the grievance policy may be followed.

U. **CONFIDENTIALITY.** Confidentiality is essential to economic development work. Verbal and/or written information received by board members and employees concerning individuals and/or businesses working with the EDC must be kept confidential unless authorization is obtained from the businesses or individuals to release information for public dissemination.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

PURPOSE AND INTENT

Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY

Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012 and developed

PERSONNEL

Definitions

Paragraphs 3-6, 7a, 7b, 8-10 and 12—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012;
paragraphs 1, 2, 7 and 11 developed

Hours of Work—Developed

Vacation Time—modified from the Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 4/15/2014

Sick Leave—modified from the Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 4/15/2014

Earned Sick and Save Leave—modified from the City of Willmar's Employee Handbook relative to 2023
Legislative changes required 10/16/2023

Holidays—Developed

Leaves

Military Leave—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Jury Duty—Developed

Employment Agreements—Developed

Reimbursement of Travel and Related Expenses Policy

Paragraphs 1, 2a, 2c, 2f, 2g, 2h, 3-5—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Paragraphs 2a, 2b, 2d, 2e—Developed

Employee Insurance—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Resignation—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Workers' Compensation—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Harassment—Kandiyohi County Rural Development Finance Authority and Kandiyohi County
Economic Development Partnership, Inc.'s Policies and Procedures Manual, which was originally
from West Central Administrative Services, Inc., Willmar, Minnesota (3/98)

Complaint Procedure—Kandiyohi County Rural Development Finance Authority and Kandiyohi
County Economic Development Partnership, Inc.'s Policies and Procedures Manual, which was
originally in part from the *Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook* (4/15/92)

Grievances—Kandiyohi County Rural Development Finance Authority and Kandiyohi County
Economic Development Partnership, Inc.'s Policies and Procedures Manual, which was originally
in part from the *Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook* (4/15/92)

Discipline—Kandiyohi County Rural Development Finance Authority and Kandiyohi County
Economic Development Partnership, Inc.'s Policies and Procedures Manual, which was originally
in part from the Rice Memorial Hospital *Personnel Policies Handbook* 1993 (03/93)

Alcohol and Drug Policy—Developed

Family and Medical Leave of Absence Policy—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Dress and Personal Appearance—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Cell Phone Policy—Developed

Computer and Electronic Communications Use—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Conflicts of Interest—Kandiyohi County Rural Development Finance Authority and Kandiyohi County
Economic Development Partnership, Inc.'s Policies and Procedures Manual, which was originally
drafted by Ronald C. Anderson, Attorney at Law, Willmar, Minnesota

Outside Employment

Acceptance of Gifts—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Use of Confidential Information—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Use of Property—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Volunteer Organizations—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Review of Potential Conflicts of Interest—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Resolution of Conflict of Interest—Kandiyohi County Employee Handbook 7/3/2012

Confidentiality—Developed

Veronica Garcia
761 1st St E
Lake Lillian, MN
Veronica.garcia@Brunswick.com
320 979 2490
1/19/2024

Dear Mr. Aaron Backman,

I am writing to express my sincere interest in joining the EDC Joint Operations Board as a dedicated and passionate member. With my background in Human Resources at Brunswick in Willmar and my extensive experience working in a diverse community, I believe I bring a unique set of skills and perspectives to contribute to the board's mission.

In my role at Brunswick, I have gained valuable insights into fostering inclusivity and understanding the needs of a diverse community. I have successfully navigated challenges by thinking creatively and approaching issues with an open mind. My commitment to creating a positive and inclusive environment aligns seamlessly with the values of the EDC.

As an active member of the community, I have witnessed the impact that effective leadership and collaboration can have on the well-being of individuals and the community. I am confident that my skills in human resources, community engagement, and problem-solving would-be valuable assets to the EDC Joint Operations Board.

I am particularly drawn to the EDC because of its efforts to assist women and diverse Business entrepreneurs. I am eager to contribute my time, skills, and enthusiasm to help advance these objectives.

Thank you for considering my application. I am excited about the opportunity to contribute to the meaningful work of the EDC Joint Operations Board. I look forward to the possibility of discussing my candidacy further.

Sincerely,

Veronica Garcia

VERONICA GARCIA

671 E 1st St. Lake Lillian Mn 56353

320/979-7995

VERO56201@GMAIL.COM

-Friendly hardworking individual with great customer service and a positive attitude. Focused on community engagement to meet the needs of a diverse community. Looking to help bridge the gaps in the community. Responsible, timely, and willing to learn new tasks.

EXPERIENCE

BRUNSWICK CORPORATION

05/16/2022- CURRENT

HUMAN RESOURCE COORDINATOR

- Orienting and onboarding training
- Safety training
- Data Entry
- Employee attendance and payroll
- Employee payroll
- Update MSDS
- Organize plant events
- Interpreting as needed
- Employee and leadership liaison to build a better working outcome

NYSTROM COUNSELING

8/2021 – 11/2021

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER

- Motivational Speaking
- 1:1 Client support
- Documentation Management
- Case Management
- Health management
- Goal setting and completion
- Community Referral Management
- Assisted with applications with housing

EDUCATION

6/1993

DIPLOMA, WILLMAR SENIOR HIGH

6/2021

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER CERTIFICATE, MINNESOTA WEST TECHNICAL COLLEGE

SKILLS

- Great communication skills
- Bilingual (Spanish)
- People-Skills
- Adaptability
- Teamwork
- Flexibility

ACTIVITIES

Hope for the City

- Distributed food to individuals at local food shelter
- Coordinated and recruiting volunteers to assist at local food shelter

References

Jessica Garcia Clinic Manager (320) 979 6005

Joanna Jerzak Clinic Manager (507) 829-7616

Rhonda Maurice Human Resource (320) 894-9373



2024 COMMITTEES AND MEMBERS

Agriculture and Renewable Energy Development

Rollie Boll	Larry Konsterlie	Keith Poier
Kevin Halvorson (Chair)	Dustin Kotrba (Vice Chair)	Nate Reuss
Erik Hatlestad	Kim Larson	Dan Tepfer
Noah Hultgren*	Dan Lippert	

Ag Industrial Hemp Exploratory Subcommittee

Kevin Halvorson (Vice Chair)	Bob Meyerson	Harold Stegeman (Chair)
Noah Hultgren*	Keith Poier	Jordan Zeller
Kim Larson		

Broadband and Advanced Technology

Duane Anderson	Bruce DeBlieck	Tony Kirby	David Sisser
Kelsey Baker	Jesse Gislason*	Michelle Marotzke (Vice Chair)	Charles Stranberg
Mark Boeschen (Chair)	Jason Hulstein	Ryan Nelson	
Paul Bolle	Roger Imdieke**	Rollie Nissen	

Business Retention and Expansion/Recruitment

Corky Berg**	Jim Ellingson (Chair)	Jennifer Mendoza	Mary Warszynski*
Sam Bowen	Steve Gardner**	Bridget Paulson	
Samantha Crow (Vice Chair)	Les Heitke*	Kelsey Vosika	

Finance

Matt Behm	Kerry Johnson (Chair)	Christopher Radel
Art Benson*	Travis Jones	Justin Schnichels
Kyle Grimm	Michelle Marotzke	Kelly TerWisscha
Allen Huselid		

Marketing and Public Relations

Ben Carlson (Vice Chair)	Tiffany Hintz	Emily Lien
Patrick Gilmore (Chair)	Ann Winge Johnson	Pam Rosenau
Jesse Gislason*		

*indicates EDC Joint Operations Board member

** indicates EDC Joint Powers Board member



Joint Powers Board Meeting
Willmar, MN
1/23/2024
Marketing and Communications Update

Re-Branding & Website Updates

- With the logo and name both confirmed a new branding guide has been created which includes a new font and colors
- The website site map has been completed and I have begun the writing of our website content pages
- Success stories will be a key feature on the webpage. Please feel free to share any suggestions for Kandiyohi County businesses, residents or investors whose story would be beneficial to share
- Lunar Media will be supporting the creation of an information video about the work we do for the new website
- Board and Committee Profiles are being collected. This will be used for the new website and will build community trust through the ability to identify neighbors as volunteers.

Marketing/Public Relations/Communications

- The winter newsletter was published with a successful open rate of 51% which is very successful for newsletter publications.
- The MPR Committee is working on goals, objectives and a unique mission statement for the committee. This will help guide the work we do and what community projects we support.
- KWLM radio interviews have been scheduled for the next 3 months.
- Full implementation of the Executive Pulse CRM is being organized, first with lists of groups or tags that will allow us to use that software in full capacity saving EDC resources

Outreach

- Communicated with all cities and townships asking for information about their communities for the website. This will be followed up by visits to council and township meetings again.
- The EDC is supporting the International Heritage Festival which will now be a program by the organization 'Move-Up' for Willmar schools
- EDC hosted food for the Latino Service Providers Network, Elevate Instructor, Stephanie Lopez, discussed the program
- Meetings with community organizations such as MNWest Campus and MMDC are being scheduled to identify what the target audience of our partners need on our website
- SWIF will once again fund transportation to the Career and Job Fair that takes place in April at Willmar HS. This is being coordinated by the EDC and supports our outreach and equity efforts.

Education

- Participated in the Renville Lunch and Learn about Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace. Takeaway included taking individuals needs and life situations into consideration and being accommodating to those needs to provide positive workplace attitude and security in employment.
- SCORE training: The Unique Challenges of Marketing a Service
- SCORE training: Ultimate Website Makeover
- SCORE training: Unleashing 2024 LinkedIn
- EDAM Winter Conference

January 25, 2024

Steve Gardner, Chairperson
Joint Powers Board of Commissioners
Kandiyohi County Economic Development
222 20th Street SE
Willmar, MN 56201

RE: Notice of Resignation from Employment at EDC

Dear Steve:

Today I am giving notice that I will be retiring from my position as Executive Director of the Kandiyohi County & City of Willmar Economic Development Commission, A.K.A. Kandiyohi County Economic Development. My last day of work will be July 31, 2024. Also, during July of this year I will be using my accrued vacation time.

This has been a difficult decision for me for I love this work, I love my projects, I love this community. Next month will be my eight-year anniversary in this capacity. I will 67 this summer. I believe I'm still pretty effective in my job responsibilities and I'm in fairly good health. However, I think it's time to pass the torch to the next leader.

I do believe there are some excellent economic developers in Minnesota that will or should consider this position. I would recommend using a public sector executive recruitment agency to cast the net, to get the best candidates. That is how I was recruited in 2015 when the EDC used Waters & Company, a Springsted company that has now merged with Baker Tilly.

It has been an honor of a lifetime to lead this organization. But nothing of significance is done alone. I've had a good team. And we as a community, a county and a region have done significant things. We collectively had an impact on Hwy 23 becoming four-lane to St. Cloud. We jointly had an impact on the Willmar Railroad Wye project becoming reality. We definitely had an impact on having FedEx build the largest project in the Willmar Industrial Park. We had a direct impact on facilitating over 700 housing units being built in Kandiyohi County. We provided financial assistance to 269 businesses and non-profits when COVID hit in 2020, 20% of whom were diverse; and over 60 businesses the following year. We helped garner millions of dollars of grants, especially for broadband in unserved and underserved rural areas of the County. We have undertaken innovative child care initiatives. We created an entrepreneurship program that has won awards and grants, boasts a waiting list, and celebrates over 50 graduates and a number of business starts.

In case you are wondering, I will not be available for a part-time contract for services after July. When I'm done, I will be done. I will be racing to the finish line to seek approvals for or the completion of projects in the pipeline. For ongoing projects and programs, I hope to hand them off by early summer.

Thank you for the support and trust you have given me and for the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Aaron A. Backman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Aaron A. Backman
Executive Director
Kandiyohi County Economic Development