



west
central
MN
2017

**Annual Performance Report for
2017-2021 Comprehensive
Economic Development Strategy
for Minnesota Region 4**

Developed by:



ADOPTED ON NOVEMBER 9, 2017

Introduction	Page 1
Regional Overview.....	Page 3
Adjustment of the Strategy	Page 9
Disaster Resiliency and Inclusion & Diversity	Page 9
EDD Board and Strategy Committee	Page 11
Report on Economic Development Activities	Page 14
Human Capital	Page 14
Economic Competitiveness	Page 15
Community Resources	Page 15
Foundational Assets	Page 16
Evaluation of Progress on Action Plan and Goals	Page 15
Schedule of Goals for the Next Year	Page 17

Introduction

The 2017 Performance Report is intended to provide an update that evaluates the status of activities and progress in accomplishing the goals and objectives set forth in the 2017-2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for West Central Minnesota. It also is intended to provide an updated snapshot of how the region is doing from an economic perspective. As part of the annual update, the data and resources related to the CEDS are also updated: That updated information can be found here: <http://wcif.org/what-we-do/planning/edplanning/ceds.html>

The 2017 Performance Report includes a narrative on the following four components:

- Adjustments to the Strategy
- Report on Economic Development Activities
- Evaluation of Progress on Implementation Plan and Goals
- Schedule of Goals for next year

The 2017-2021 CEDS was a new 5-year plan for the 9 County Region known as Economic Development District 4 (EDR 4), located in West Central MN. The Counties served by EDR are as follows: Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin.

A new approach was utilized in the development of the 5-year CEDS, now approaching the end of its first year of implementation. Starting in 2012 the 10 member organizations that make up the Minnesota Association of Development Organizations (MADO) embarked on a collaborative effort to align strategic economic development efforts throughout Greater Minnesota, and leverage resources at all levels for a greater overall development impact. The end result was a Comprehensive Development Strategy for Greater Minnesota that was published January 1, 2016 known as DevelopMN <http://www.mnado.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/DevelopMN-Plan-2016-final-web.pdf>

The intent of the DevelopMN document was two-fold, one was to identify commonalities and opportunities for cross region collaboration. The second was to serve as a base for each of the 10 Economic Development Districts to build their regional CEDS upon. The Regional CEDS document was then developed to focus in at a regional level with a similar format approach that was used in the creation of the DevelopMN document. Applicable content from the DevelopMN plan was used throughout the CEDS.

Creating economic prosperity is a multifaceted process. Historically agriculture, mining, and perceived low costs (primarily related to inexpensive labor, lower taxes, and land availability) have provided economic advantages to Greater Minnesota. Agriculture continues to play a large role in the region's economy. That role is everything from crop and livestock production, implement and machinery manufacturing, and also includes value-added production and manufacturing. While taxes are still lower than in some areas of the State, local governments in west central, and across Greater Minnesota have struggled keep tax rates low and still have the ability to adequately fund necessary governmental services and infrastructure. Ag land values and input costs have increased, resulting in increased production costs, and crop prices are not adjusting

upward to coincide. Communities have found new challenges in promoting undeveloped land that requires extending already burdened and costly infrastructure to that land. Additionally, many communities have experienced an increase of brownfield sites needing redevelopment. This has become especially challenging for larger institutional property such as schools, hospitals, big box retail building, and churches that have closed or not expanded or renovated in their existing location, thereby needing to construct new buildings in other locations leaving now empty structures that are difficult to find an adaptive reuse or repurposing for, and as a last option, extremely expensive to demolish. Additionally, one impact of United States moving away from coal sourced power generation because of increased renewable energy and environmental requirements is that some communities in the region are now facing challenges in how they will handle the closure and decommissioning or in some cases the retrofitting of coal fired power plants.

These local/regional factors are now coupled with the ever-increasing need to maintain a connection to, and be part of the global economy. The region needs to place an emphasis on preserving traditional industries, improving the quality of inputs and facilitating innovation as the driver of long-term competitiveness, growth and employment.

The DevelopMN strategy and subsequent regional CEDS identified four cornerstones as key components of strong region's and communities. They apply to the whole of Greater Minnesota as much as they do to this region. If a coordinated approach is taken in implementing these components the region and its communities will become stronger and economically prosperous. The four cornerstones are:

- Human Capital
- Economic Competitiveness
- Community Resources
- Foundational Assets

The full 2017-2021 CEDS can be accessed through the following link to West Central Initiative's (WCI's) website:
<http://wcif.org/what-we-do/planning/edplanning/ceds.html> The full document and its appendices provides greater detail on the background, demographics, labor force, and economy at both a regional and individual county level.

Regional Overview

This regional overview is intended to provide an updated snapshot of the region on key indicators that are addressed in the 2017-2021 CEDS and its appendices. Economic Development Region 4 (EDR 4) continues to see an increase in the aging population, at higher levels than other areas of the state and the out-migration of young adults, a trend since the 1940's. A noted factor not reflected in the out-migration of young adults (18-24) is the phenomenon known as the “Brain Gain”, which is the in-migration of 30–49-year-old adults and their young children to rural communities across the region and state. The subject of the brain gain, has been a growing topic in recent years, and its impact will be further analyzed as part of the CEDS implementation in the upcoming year. According to the 2010 Census the region grew, but only four of the nine counties gained population from previous census evaluations and the growth in those counties is concentrated in the more urban communities. It should be noted that some of the counties that have seen consistent losses are now beginning to shift direction away from continuous population loss. Farming and other agricultural based business continues to be a major factor in the region’s economy. Four industries employ 75% of the workforce. They are Education & Health Services, Trade Transportation & Utilities, Manufacturing, and Leisure & Hospitality. Post-recession, a skilled workforce shortage has re-emerged. Two major contributing factors for this include: Upcoming retirements, out-migration of the 18-24 years old cohort to urban areas. Once a factor, but now exhibiting a diminished impact was the draw to the high-paying jobs in the North Dakota oil fields. As oil exploration and production has decreased, so has the job opportunity. Yet, many industries throughout the region are increasingly struggling to fill workforce needs, and that challenge is anticipated to increase.

Demographics (Population)

2016 Population Estimates

County	2016 Population	2010 Population	Change in 2016 from 2000
Becker	33,734	32,504	3,545
Clay	62,875	58,999	11,583
Douglas	37,456	36,009	4,575
Grant	5,956	6,018	-305
Otter Tail	58,085	57,303	1,012
Pope	11,049	10,995	-147
Stevens	9,693	9,726	-329
Traverse	3,356	3,558	-767
Wilkin	6,358	6,576	-735
Region	228,562	221,688	18,432

Source: MN State Demographer and 2010 Census

Based on revised State Demographer numbers (March 2017), the 2045 the regional population is expected to grow to just under 237,000. This is a reduction in the previous estimate of 250,000 in 2045. The last Census put the 2010 population at just over 221,000.

Projected Regional Population 2020-2050

2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
230,949	233,909	235,619	236,661	236,991	236,869	236,766

Source: MN State Demographer

2050 Projected Population by County

Becker County	Clay County	Douglas County	Grant County	Otter Tail County	Pope County	Stevens County	Traverse County	Wilkin County
36,270	70,754	39,528	5,346	56,956	10,393	9,778	2,103	5,638

Source: MN State Demographer

Demographics (Diversity)

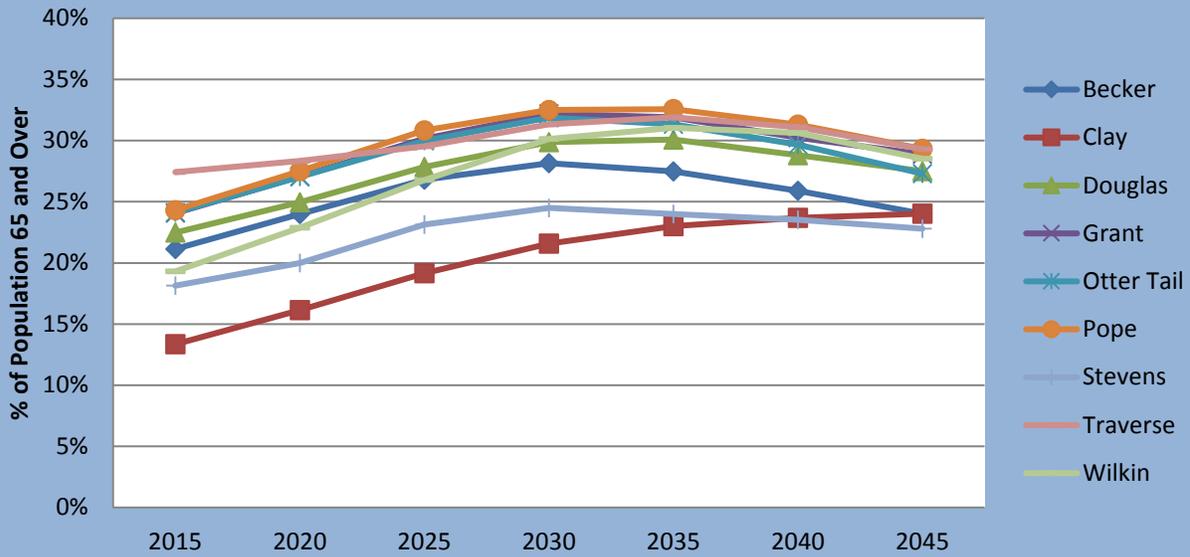
The racial diversity of the region is increasing and is expected to continue to increase. According to the 2010 Census, 14% of the population growth the region experienced from 2000 to 2010 was from a minority group. Becker, Clay, Stevens, and Traverse have the most diverse population makeup based on population numbers.

The region is forecast to have 9.5% of the total population being a minority by 2035. Currently, approaching 9.0% it is likely the region will well exceed 10% mark by 2035. Compare this to statewide minority population projection of 24.8%, or the nation at 46.9% for 2035, it appears marginal, but it is still a significant change for the makeup for the region. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin makeup the greatest percent of minority persons and this is anticipated to continue. The region's ability to embrace diversity and inclusion strategies is growing increasingly more important every day.

Demographics (Age)

Currently, about 20% of the regional population is over 65. The percent of the population over 65 for the region will continue to increase dramatically until about 2030-2035. The effects that this aging of the population has on communities, the workforce, services, etc. are enormous.

Percent of Population 65+ By County By Year (Revised 2014)

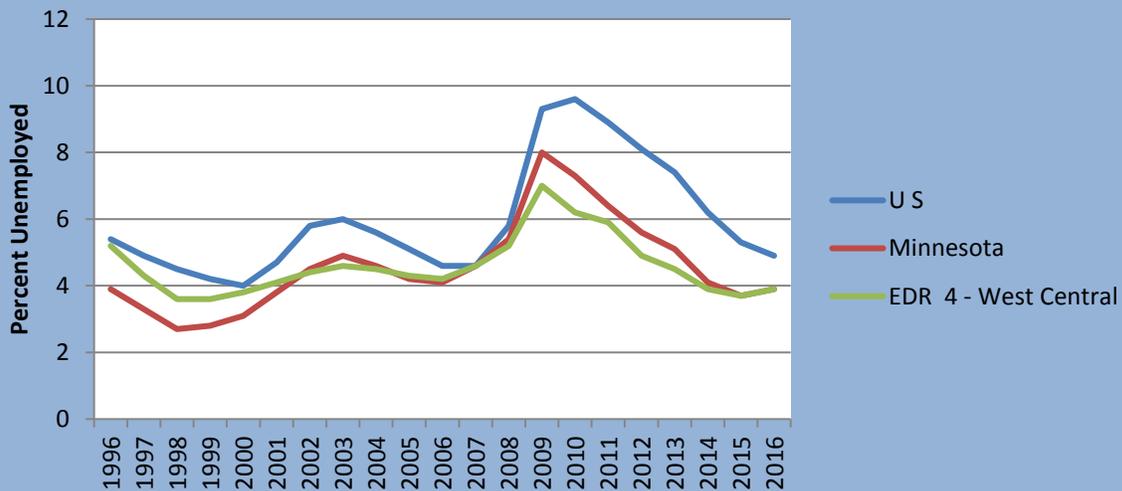


Source: MN State Demographer

Unemployment

The average 24-month unemployment rate for EDR 4 at 3.8%, is down from three years ago (5.7%), two years ago (4.6%) and is close to last year's analysis (3.74%). The region is now at historic lows, and will most likely not fall much lower. The average unemployment rate for 2000-2007 (pre-recession) was 3.8%. The average 24-month unemployment rate for individual counties ranges from 2.9% to 4.6%, which is relatively equal to last year's range. The chart below indicates a historical look at unemployment for the region compared to the state, and nation.

Annual Unemployment Rate 1996-2016

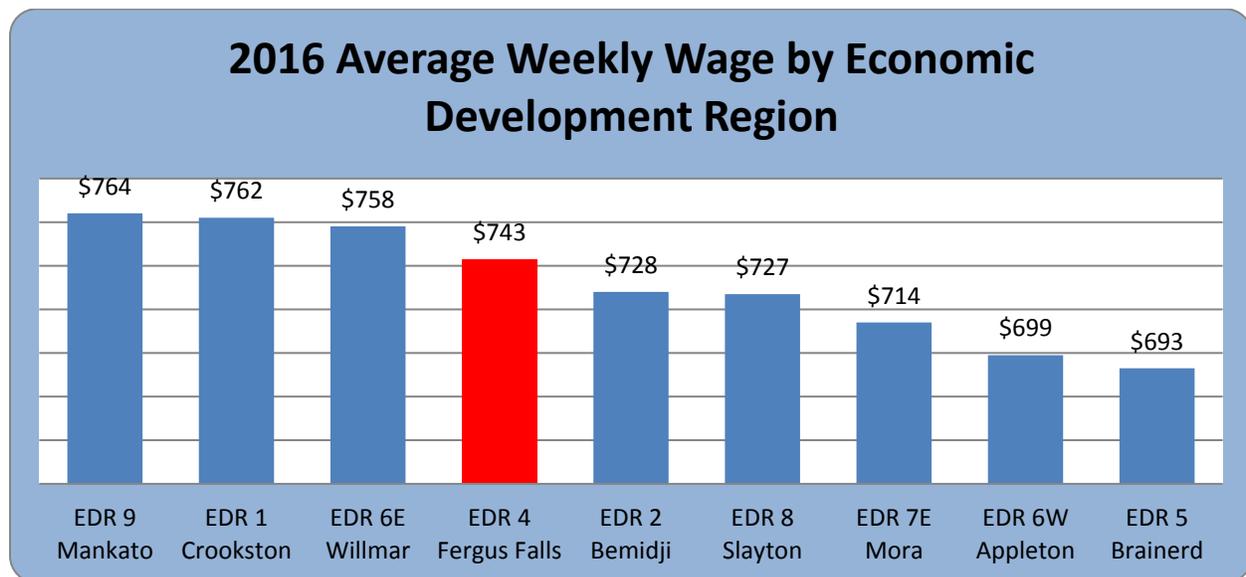


Source: MN DEED Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Per Capita Income (PCI) and Wages

Currently, none of the nine counties fall below the 80% threshold of the national per capita income that indicates “distress”. When looking at the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) data for 2016, all counties in the region are actually at almost 84% or higher of the national per capita income, with 2 counties exceeding 100%. The 2016 PCI percentages did decrease from years prior in all counties; this is most likely related to the continued decline in crop prices as a major factor. These numbers are not truly representative of what is really occurring related to income when you look into smaller areas at the community and township levels where many municipal areas, townships, and census tracts fall below the 80% PCI threshold.

Wages remain to be an obstacle for the region. The 2016 average weekly wage for the region was \$743, both the state and national level just exceed \$1,000. The region’s Median Household Income for 2016 is \$57,615, applied as an hourly wage that equates to \$27.70/hr or \$1,108 a week. For a family of four with one adult working, to simply meet basic needs they need to earn \$927/week (\$23.18/hr), with both adults working a combined \$1,191/week (each a minimum of \$14.90/hr). The chart shown below identifies where Average Weekly Wages for the region (EDR 4) compare to the wages in other *rural* economic development regions throughout the state. Note: the communities listed are for approximate geographic reference. (Duluth, Rochester, St. Cloud and Minneapolis/St. Paul areas have been omitted)



Source: MN DEED QCEW

The region’s Average Weekly Wage continues to increase, but has not closed the gap between it and the state and national level.

Annual Average Weekly Wage 2000-2016

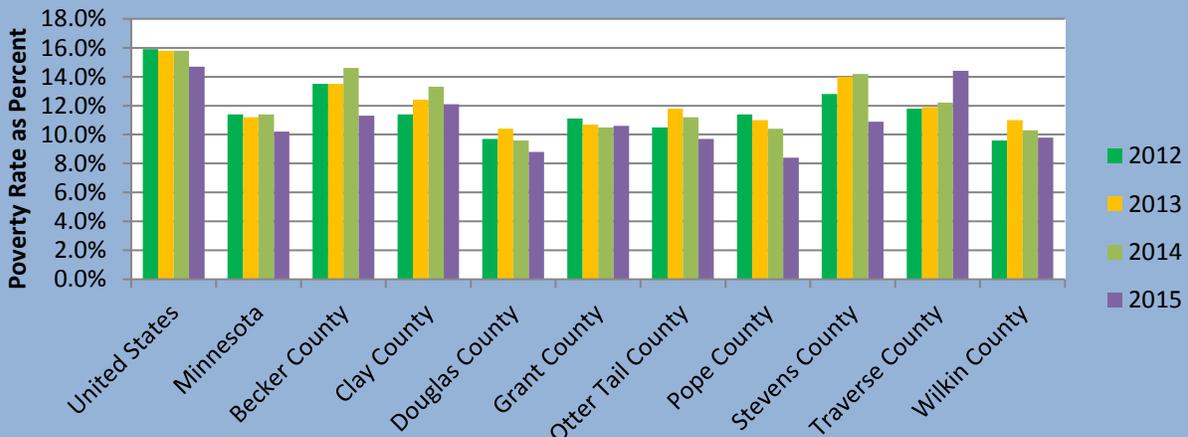


Source: MN DEED QCEW *2016 US AWW not available at time of publication

Poverty

Douglas, Otter Tail, Pope, and Wilkin all have poverty levels at or below the 2015 state level of 11.4%. All counties, except Traverse remain below the national poverty rate, which is 14.7%. While the poverty rate for the US and MN has stabilized since a significant jump from prior to 2011, the poverty rate in several of the region's counties continues to remain at higher levels. This can in part be attributed to high employment in lower wage jobs.

Poverty Rates by County 2012-2015



Source: US Census Bureau SAIPE Data

Workforce and Industry

In the region four industries are predicted to see the most need for employees in the next few years:

- Trade, Transportation & Utilities
- Professional & Business Services
- Education & Health Services
- Leisure & Hospitality

Economic recovery and hiring is continuing to happen. Manufacturing production is going strong, and the conversation has now shifted to companies now being challenged by finding enough workers. The shortage of workers able to fill open positions has now become a common and ever-growing problem in many of the region's communities and businesses across all industry classifications. This is interrelated with an emerging need to identify solutions for adequate and affordable housing, childcare, as well as increased wages.

Adjustment to the Strategy

The CEDS is meant to be a flexible document and may be adjusted to respond to changing economic conditions. The planning process that resulted in the completed 2017-2021 CEDS for WCI was directly tied to the extensive planning process that was undertaken in the development of WCI's organizational strategic plan that falls within a similar overlapping timeframe. The development of both plans was a result of a process that engaged partners, stakeholders, and residents of the west central region. The resulting components of each plan that correspond and correlated to each other were incorporated into the CEDS. Furthermore, the CEDS strategy committee, EDD Board, and each of the nine county boards provided an additional level of review, input, and perspective on the plan, and the goals and objectives. The CEDS was then fine-tuned to align with the DevelopMN Strategy and most importantly EDA requirements. In addition to the annual review and update of the CEDS, WCI conducts an evaluation of the organizations strategic plan to make mid-course adjustments. As a result of this review and evaluation process; no formal adjustments have been made to content or strategic direction of the CEDS for 2017 going into the second year of implementation. The goals and objectives have remained the same, and were affirmed by the EDD Board at its November 9, 2017 meeting.

The top six economic development challenges, or trends that continue to demand primary focus continue to be:

- **Grow the workforce**
- **Need for more Child Care openings and providers**
- **Housing affordability and availability**
- **Increased Wages**
- **Expand Broadband access and coverage**
- **Impacts of the rising cost of Energy**

However, it is important for communities to continue to be able to accommodate new business and industry when those opportunities arise.

Economic Resiliency and Inclusion & Diversity Strategy:

No matter the approach to or focus of economic development, it must always consider two overarching key components: **Economic Resiliency** and **Diversity/Inclusion**.

Economic Resiliency is defined as an area's ability to prevent, withstand and quickly recover from major disruptions (i.e., 'shocks') to its economic base, which is a key element to ensuring and preserving regional economic prosperity. While not called out frequently in the document, it is implied that economic resiliency is a component of all activities associated with economic development in the region. The Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) serves as a useful resource in providing consideration and direction in developing strategies to achieve economic resilience.

According to the EDA, it should focus on three primary attributes:

- the ability to recover quickly from a shock
- the ability to withstand a shock
- the ability to avoid the shock altogether

Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a

responsive capacity. At the regional or community level, economic development practitioners are instrumental in building the capacity for economic resilience. Economic development professionals and organizations often become the focal point for post-incident coordination, information dissemination, external inquiry response, and the lead grant administrator for federally funded recovery initiatives. In building economic resilience, it is critical that economic development organizations consider their role in the pre- and post-incident environments to include steady-state and responsive initiatives.

Steady-state initiatives tend to be long-term efforts that seek to bolster the community or region's ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives can include establishing capabilities for the economic development organization to be responsive to the region's recovery needs following an incident.

Inclusion and Diversity are the second and equally important considerations. The numbers are extremely telling. Our region's communities and its workforce will not grow unless we can increase domestic and international migration to our region. The region's communities need to incorporate an inclusive approach to attracting and welcoming new residents. If not, new residents won't stay very long, or may not come at all. The Blandin Foundation's Community Leadership Program identifies inclusion as 1 of 8 dimensions of a healthy community. It further defines Inclusion as: People consistently making the effort required to capitalize on the range of differences in the community and intentionally seeking ways to utilize the diverse backgrounds, experiences and skills of everyone for the benefit of the whole community. Organizations, groups, and local government should actively seek out and encourage all people to participate in planning, decision-making and action in the community. The community also needs to recognize and value the many benefits of including the voices and perspectives of all its residents. The community must be welcoming and makes a consistent effort to help everyone feel that they belong. Regardless of how they are defined, growing diversity and creating inclusion needs to be intentional and actionable as communities address their economic development challenges.

Current Work addressing Economic Resiliency and Inclusion and Diversity:

During the last several years, WCI has been asked to serve on an Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee for Otter Tail County and Douglas County. The existing relationships with county and city staff throughout the region also allows WCI to provide assistance, when appropriate, on projects related to the prevention and mitigation prior to disasters based on projects identified in the Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Beginning in early 2014, WCI was invited to take part in a process known as Philanthropic Preparedness, Resiliency & Emergency Partnership (PPREP). Originally, a two-year program that consists of a cohort group of 18 Midwest community foundations, now in its second Phase which started in Spring of 2017. Phase 2.0 added several more community foundations, and statewide philanthropic organizations to the cohort. The lead agency coordinating the program is the Funders Network, and technical assistance is being provided by the Center for Disaster Philanthropy. The intent of the program is to provide resources, learning, as establish best practices so that participating community foundations can build their skills and leadership capacity in order to be better prepared should a disaster occur.

As a part of this project, WCI has identified that the recovery phase of disaster is where the organization is best positioned to offer resources. As part of developing a formal plan and establishing stronger relationships with the emergency management community, WCI staff has met with all county emergency managers, several city emergency managers, and is currently working to set up meetings with other stakeholders that have a role in disaster response and recovery, such as local United Ways and Red Cross chapters.

A formal plan will be developed and shared with each county, as part of their disaster preparedness planning after the conclusion of the project.

Additionally, WCI was awarded a grant in January 2016 which facilitated an effort to raise awareness on the importance of having business continuity plans, and direct businesses to easily accessible resources to develop those plans. A second piece to the grant was to work with the region’s Early Childhood Initiatives to identify strategies to better prepare childcare providers to develop similar continuity plans, as they play an important role as businesses, by in part providing for additional workforce, and the caretakers of children for workers in the region.

Current work to continue building inclusive and diverse communities has included providing grant support to non-profit organizations that work with and provide direct services to new Americans, partnering with post-secondary institutions on developing workforce training/skill development programs. Work has also been conducted with entrepreneurial service and financing sources to ensure access and programs are available equally to all interested parties.

EDD Board, CEDS Strategy Committee, and Staff Changes

WCI President Brad Barth left WCI at the end of December 2016, and an interim president, Terry Stallman, was named in January 2017. WCI’s new president, Anna Wasescha, took over leadership of the organization in May of 2017.

2017-2018 EDD GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS

MEMBER:	COUNTY:	REPRESENTING:	AFFILIATION:
Neal Folstad	Wilkin	County Commissioner	Elected Official
Ron Zeman	Becker	Detroit Lakes City Council	Elected Official
Jeff Miller	Stevens	Morris City Council	Elected Official
Ben Grimsley	Becker	County Commissioner	Elected Official
Joel Dahlheimer	All	Townships	Elected Official
Darren Appert	Otter Tail	Fergus Falls City Council	Elected Official
Troy Johnson	Grant	County Commissioner	Elected Official

Joel Paulsen	Clay	Moorhead City Council	Elected Official
Wayne Johnson	Otter Tail	County Commissioner	Elected Official EDD Chair
Gordy Wagner	Pope	County Commissioner	Elected Official
Todd Jensen	Douglas	Alexandria City Council	Elected Official
Jeanne Dusing	Traverse	Browns Valley City Council	Elected Official
Frank Gross	Clay	County Commissioner	Elected Official
Bob Kopitzke	Stevens	County Commissioner	Elected Official EDD Vice-Chair
Dave Salberg	Traverse	County Commissioner	Elected Official
Charlie Meyer	Douglas	County Commissioner	Elected Official

2017-2018 EDD GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS CONTINUED

MEMBER:	COUNTY:	REPRESENTING:	AFFILIATION:
Amy Stoller Stearns	Becker	WCI Board	Arts/Non-Profit
Cheri Johnson	Clay	WCI Board	Small Business EDD Secretary
Jerry Arneson	Clay	WCI Board	Finance
Jessica Boyer	Douglas	WCI Board	Non-profits
John Dalseng	Pope	WCI Board	Manufacturing
Dan Ellison	Grant	WCI Board	Agriculture
John MacFarlane	Otter Tail	WCI Board	Utilities
Dean Simpson	Otter Tail	WCI Board	Mid-size Business
Warren Anderson	Stevens	WCI Board	Law
Sue Dieter	Stevens	WCI Board	Media
Jane Vangsness Frisch	Traverse	WCI Board	Education
Steve Kent	Wilkin	WCI Board	Agri-Business

2017 STRATEGY COMMITTEE

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Public/ Private</u>	<u>Representation</u>
Stan Thurlow	Planning Consultant	Private	Community/Economic Development
Lisa Vatnsdal	City of Moorhead	Public	Housing
Nicole Fernholz	Alexandria Area Economic Development Commission	Private	Regional Economic Development
Gary Donovan	University of Minnesota Morris	Public	Education
Muriel Krusemark	City of Hoffman	Public	Small Town Economic Development Volunteer
Gerry Nelson	StoneL (retired) and Labor Force Development Council	Private	Manufacturing Workforce
Gordon Hydukovich	City of Fergus Falls	Public	Large-City Economic Development
Chuck Johnson	City of Perham	Public	Mid-City Economic Development
Teresa Jergensen	WASP Manufacturing	Private	Manufacturing
Scott Formo	City of Glenwood Chamber of Commerce	Public	Business Association Interests
Kevin Beyer	Federated Telcom	Private	Broadband/ Telecommunications
Dale Umlauf	Otter Tail Power	Private	Finance Entrepreneurship
Shane Ayres	Wheaton Community Hospital	Private	Healthcare
Greg Wagner	West Central Initiative	Private	Economic Development
Wayne Hurley	West Central Initiative	Private	Transportation
Jana Berndt	Bremer Bank	Private	Finance
Chris Buckingham	Small Business Owner Entrepreneur	Private	Technology Small Business
Yuri Machkasov	Riverwood Bank/U of M Morris	Private	Latino/Hispanic Community Interests

Report on Economic Development Activities

Human Capital Cornerstone

The following specific projects have been determined to directly align with advancing the goals and objectives set forth in the 2017-2021 CEDS under each of the four cornerstones.

1. Live Wide Open www.livewideopen.com

Live Wide Open is a bold new movement to encourage people to move to, return to and, yes, stay in west central Minnesota. Regional community foundation, West Central Initiative, tapped the collective wisdom of the West Central Minnesota Labor Force Development Council to initiate the Live Wide Open marketing campaign to showcase what the region has to offer, including opportunities for rewarding careers while living close to family, friends and the natural amenities that continue to draw many to west central Minnesota.

- Currently, 29 stories of west central Minnesota residents on the web page
- 22 videos sharing stories of the region and 25 business/community partners
- Working with two consultants who are building the story library through various media, and managing social media content and engagement

2. BestForce www.wcif.org/what-we-do/programs/workforce/bestforce.html

BestForce focuses on providing workforce training to small manufacturers who are interested in elevating the capacity of their firm by increasing the skill level of their current workforce.

- For Fiscal Year 17 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017) 25 grants were made to regional manufacturers with a total WCI investment of \$150,000, plus local match.
- Training was provided through Enterprise Minnesota (Minnesota's Manufacturing Extension Partnership)

3. Workforce Solutions Grant Program

<http://wcif.org/what-we-do/programs/workforce/workforce-solutions-grants.html>

- Work with 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations or units of government to complete projects that improve the region's ability to attract and retain a workforce that possesses the talents needed to strengthen the economy
- Provided funding for 9 projects totaling \$135,000

4. Partnerships with Educational Institutions

- WCI continues to partner with and Minnesota State Community and Technical College (M-State), which has 3 of its 4 campuses in the region as well as Alexandria Technical and Community College (Alex Tech)
- Customized Training Support
- Partnerships include project collaboration and funding support.
- WCI supports many projects that are implemented by Lakes Country Service Cooperative, which is a Minnesota Service Cooperative (www.lcsc.org)
- Dream It Do It MN www.dreamitdoitmn.com
- West Central MN Dream it Do it www.tsmn.org
- Labor Force Development Council
 - i. www.wcif.org/what-we-do/programs/workforce/lfdc.html

5. Partnerships with other Service Providers

- Partnership and scholarship funding for business leadership forums
- Community Action Program support for tax preparation services, and child care support programs

Economic Competitiveness Cornerstone

1. Live Wide Open (see Human Capital)

2. Loan Programs

- For Fiscal Year 17 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017) 70 loans were closed including 49 Forgivable Child Care Loans
- Total loan amount was \$1,560,006

3. Technical Assistance Partnership Support

- SBDC Partnership: Provided annual funding support, assisted with promoting and hosting training, conducted numerous referrals to SBDC for services
- NW Legal Services Partnership: collaborated on technical assistance and sharing of resources
- Immigrant Law Center, provided funding support
- Child Care Loans and Grants
- Emergency Preparedness work in Business Continuity Planning www.stayopenforbiz.org
- Center for Small Towns
- Banker meetings and convening's
- Economic Development Professional's Quarterly meetings
- Business Retention and Expansion Projects (Pelican Rapids and Battle Lake)
- Reestablishment of community level economic development resources (Vergas Loan Fund, Battle Lake Economic Development Authority, and Pelican Rapids Economic Development Corporation)

Community Resources Cornerstone

1. Live Wide Open (see Human Capital)

2. Community leadership program support

- Continued the support of the 5 established programs

- Worked with other communities to explore local leadership program establishment or available existing services from established providers
- 3. Creative Action Network**
 - Worked with strategic partners: Springboard for the Arts, Bush Foundation and consultant
 - Five communities completed the program incorporating the arts to address community issues.
 - 4. Partnered with local level marketing/tourism campaigns**
 - Find Your Inner Otter <https://ottertailakescountry.com/>
 - Living Alexandria <https://livingalexarea.org/>
 - 5. Early Childhood Work**
 - <http://wcif.org/what-we-do/programs/early-childhood/eci.html>
 - 6. Heartland Giving**
 - <http://wcif.org/give/ways-to-give/heartlandgiving/heartland-faqs.html>
 - 7. Philanthropy**
 - 2,185 donors gave to 54 component funds during Fiscal Year 2017
 - \$3.5 million in grants from component funds

Foundational Assets

- 1. Transportation Planning**
 - Safe Routes to School (SRTS), Complete Streets, Transit
 - Completed 3 more SRTS plans in Fiscal Year 17, which now total 16 for the region
 - City of Hawley's SRTS plan is underway
 - 3 Communities have underwent a Complete Streets project, and Glenwood is slated for spring 2018
 - Updated Transit Coordination Plan, approved November 9, 2017
- 2. Pine to Prairie GIS Users Group**
 - Continued to host Pine to Prairie GIS Users Group 3 times a year
- 3. Emergency Preparedness**
 - Continued involvement in Year 3 of Philanthropic Preparedness, Resiliency & Emergency Partnership
 - Business Continuity Plan Resource: www.stayopenforbiz.org
- 4. Broadband**
 - Six projects will impact areas of five counties in the region with total investment of over \$6 million from MN Department of Employment and Economic Development from the Border-to-Border Broadband Grant 2017 Program (State funds are required to be matched).
<https://mn.gov/deed/programs-services/broadband/grant-program/>
 - Traverse County received the 2017 Outstanding Economic Development Award for the counties work on their broadband infrastructure projects
http://www.mncounties.org/meetings_and_education/amc_annual_conference/awards.php
 - The Blandin Foundation has provided grant funding for Otter Tail, Traverse, and Pope County to conduct Broadband Feasibility Studies.

Schedule of Goals for the Next Year

The goals and objectives contained in the CEDS closely relate to the goals and objectives outlined in WCI's Strategic Plan. Therefore, as an organization all the existing goals currently in the CEDS will be worked on throughout the next year. As an organization WCI conducts a mid-point review on status and progress of the goals outlined in the plan. These goals were developed with the intention that they would be worked on throughout the course of the year as opportunities arise, and therefore a detailed schedule is not believed to be necessary to accomplish these goals.

Priority Areas and additional focus that will be addressed in the next year include the following:

1. Implement Phase 3 of the Forgivable Child Care Loan Program (February to July).
2. Continue to work with partners on addressing workforce shortages and the skills gap throughout the region (July to December)
3. Evaluate a role for WCI in housing discussions. (April to July).
4. Work with interested communities, including Battle Lake to implement business retention and expansion programs (March to June).
5. Reestablish the utilization of community loan funds as an additional source of capital for business start-ups, expansions and acquisitions (January to July).
6. Work with partners who specialize in transition and succession planning to develop resources for local businesses (February to October)
7. Monitor industry clusters existing in the region and provide necessary support for those that have the potential for growth in the region (August-November).
8. Public/Private Partnerships: Identify successful models in the region, with a focus on Broadband infrastructure, and quantify impact (November-June).
9. Meet with Blandin Foundation to identify expanded roles for WCI on the topic of Broadband (February).
10. Supporting Diversity, work with existing organizations and develop stronger relationships with those organization and tribal partners (February-August).
11. Continue to develop opportunities for communities to access financial capital and workforce training, and support (May-August).
12. Update and expand business continuity planning resources for regional businesses (May-Dec).
13. Develop and implement a tracking dashboard for the Goals outlined in the CEDS (July-October).
14. Assist in roll-out of new grant program to support community level projects. (January-March).
15. Evaluate the impact of the updated (downgraded) population forecasts as well as the "Brain-Gain" phenomenon and develop strategies to address both of those factors (April-September).