

# Kandiyohi County Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program

## Workshop Summary



# Kandiyohi County Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Program

## Initiated By:

- Kandiyohi County and City of Willmar Economic Development Commission
- Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce Grow MN! Team

## Project Objectives:

1. Demonstrate support for local businesses
2. Help solve immediate business concerns
3. Increase local businesses' ability to compete in the global economy
4. Establish and implement a strategic plan for economic development
5. Build capacity to sustain growth and development

## Process:

1. Business visits to identify critical issues (complete)
  - **Convention · Retail · Tourism · Service Industries (CRTS): 60 businesses**
  - **Manufacturing Industries: 22 businesses**
2. Analyze survey data, set priorities and identify projects (enclosed)
3. Work on projects, evaluate results, publish reports and BR&E continuation (to be determined)

## Summary of Step 2: February 25, 2015

*Facilitated by Linda Mathiasen, LDMarketing*

### Task: Analyze survey data, set priorities and identify projects

#### SWOT Analysis:

##### STRENGTHS (no significance in order)

- **Business Leadership:** We have stable and engaged business leaders.
- **Workforce:** We have a diverse skill set and value work ethic.
- **Expansion:** We have planned expansion and future investment into our county for both CRTS and Manufacturing.
- **Regional Center:** We have strong business mix, education opportunities, utilities, emergency and health care services, anchor businesses, existing workforce and job availability.
- **Rural Lifestyle:** We have the benefits of rural living and recreational opportunities with lakes, parks and trails.
- **Agricultural Economy:** We have agricultural roots and cluster of agribusinesses.

##### WEAKNESSES (no significance in order)

- **Workforce Availability:** We have job openings that exceed current workforce.
- **Lack of Expansion of Existing Businesses:** We have 43% of respondents not looking to expand their business.
- **Aging Workforce:** We have an aging population in traditional-type positions.
- **Housing:** We have a gap in housing compared to needs.
- **Race Inclusion:** We have a failure to embrace diversity and demographic changes.
- **Broadband:** We have inconsistent speed, quality and access to broadband.
- **Transportation:** We have no four-lane access connection to another regional center or metropolitan area.
- **Amenities:** We have limited variety and access to national chains for shopping and entertainment venues.
- **Community Leadership:** We have a perception of closed community and against diversity.
- **Millennials:** We have a disconnection between wants and needs of young workforce.
- **Community Planning:** We have beautification and aesthetic needs in downtown Willmar.
- **Education:** We have students graduating without the skills to enter the workforce and a changing student body.
- **Business Access:** We have a lack of key business services in small communities.
- **Pay:** We have low pay level job positions.

**OPPORTUNITIES** (no significance in order)

- **Specialized Jobs:** We have openings to recruit skilled workers to the county.
- **Highway Transportation:** We have legislators' acknowledgement for four-lane highway.
- **Global Markets:** We have many existing businesses selling globally.
- **Revenues:** We have increasing sales among existing businesses.
- **Grants:** We have state and federal enhancement assistance opportunities for housing, telecommunications, parks and trails.
- **Tax & Government Reform:** We have business opportunities through tax reform, including but not limited to changes to mental health mandates.
- **Airport:** We have capacity and demand for passenger and cargo air travel.
- **Immigration:** We have an immigrant base and history.

**THREATS** (no significance in order)

- **Mandates and Regulatory Changes:** We have unfunded state and federal mandates, including but not limited to health care reform.
- **Transportation:** We have limited capacity and access on Highway 12 and Highway 23.
- **Taxes:** We have tax considerations impacting state competitiveness.
- **Perception:** We have a closed community perception and against inclusion of outsiders.
- **Manufacturing:** We have minimal industry variety of manufacturers.
- **Immigrants:** We have a large immigrant population.
- **Broadband:** We have inconsistent speed, quality and access to broadband.
- **Housing:** We have a gap in housing availability.
- **Government Assistance:** We have government benefits influencing desire for employment.
- **National Markets:** We have 60% of local manufacturers selling nationally, reducing the importance of corporate location.

**Priorities to Address Objectives:** (no significance in order)

[Objectives: Help solve immediate business concerns, Increase local businesses' ability to compete in the global economy and build capacity to sustain growth and development]

- Perception of Outsiders and Lack of Acceptance of Diverse Populations Among Community Leaders
- Broadband Speed and Access
- Number of Workers Lacking Required Skills
- Reputation of Schools
- Short-term Training Opportunities for Skilled Positions
- Job Opportunities for Skilled Workforce

## **PROJECTS IDENTIFIED:**

### **Project 1: Identifying, engaging and inspiring our currently under-utilized workforce**

**Who might be involved:** Local K-12 Schools, Ridgewater College/MnSCU, businesses with employment needs, EDC, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services, community leaders (cultural), county offices (e.g. Farm Services, HRA)

**Who should be involved:** All of the above.

#### **Recommended next steps:**

1. Identify project leaders/champions
2. Meet with agencies that have data
3. Identify community vehicles
4. Define message
5. Define target audience

### **Project 2. Perception of outsiders/lack of diversity; larger region will recognize the Willmar Lakes Area, Kandiyohi County and the City of Willmar as a community that embraces diversity.**

**Who might be involved:** City Council/leadership, school leadership and county leadership

**Who should be involved:** Chad Peterson, Vinje Lutheran Church, Vision 2040, business leaders, faith community leaders, schools (parents and students), Zak Mahboub, Guillermo Serrano, Jeff Madsen, cultural leaders

#### **Recommended next steps:**

1. Education—work with schools that have access to parents and children
2. Programs/trainings for businesses. Smaller groups of people, about local cultures—they can then help set the tone for each of us being accountable of the perception
3. Change community conversations
4. Multicultural event to celebrate diversity

### **Project 3: Excellence in our schools**

**Who might be involved:** One representative from each school district, administration and elected leadership, business, chamber, grassroots, students, cultural liaisons, media, city leadership, educators

**Who should be involved:** City leadership, media, district leadership, students, business community, educators

#### **Recommended next steps:**

1. Form committee/make contacts/get buy-in
2. Developing a marketing campaign
3. Media placing focus on positive stories on our school districts
4. Educating business on school offerings, a two-way conversation

### **Project 4: Stabilizing our workforce—now and into the future**

**Who might be involved:** Schools, State of Minnesota Workforce Center, businesses to understand needs, minority populations, *All Hands on Deck* data published 2011

**Who should be involved:** School district (high school and college level), large and small business representation, same as list of “might be” involved

#### **Recommended next steps:**

1. Community forum to discuss issues with open dialogue
2. Encourage more on-the-job training
3. Encourage job shadowing for youth, apprenticeship/CEO program
4. Diversity among educational professionals

## **Project 5: Marketing Area as a Place of Job Opportunities and Lifestyle**

**Who might be involved:** See below

**Who should be involved:** Ridgewater College, Jobs Training grants, University of Minnesota Extension Service, businesses looking for work, K-12 (industrial tech, robotics classes), CEO program, apprenticeship program, Workforce Center, NEXT

### **Recommended next steps:**

1. Create a marketing campaign to market job opportunities in Kandiyohi County
2. Include the lifestyle a job in Willmar provides
3. Host Job Fairs showcasing multiple specialties
4. Promote mobile world

## **Project 6: Broadband expansion/availability in Kandiyohi County**

**Who might be involved:** Government, current providers, businesses, Blandin Foundation, EDC, Southwest Initiative Foundation.

**Who should be involved:** Same as above. Willmar, as a regional center, needs to have the best available service. 1 gig is the best now. Rural areas meet state definitions of broadband.

### **Recommended next steps:**

1. Survey that the EDC is undertaking
2. More discussions with providers on what are their plans and what needs to have them take the step further
3. Learn from others that have done it
4. Training sessions for retail to teach them what they can do

**Project 7: Increased availability of job qualified workers. Short-term training/diplomas**

**Who might be involved?**

Employment agencies and private businesses

**Who should be involved?**

Ridgewater College, K-12 schools, Central Minnesota Jobs & Training Services, private businesses (capacity), Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, EDC, Mid-Minnesota Development Commission, Willmar Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Vision 2040, focus group

**Recommended next steps:**

1. Focus group of area employers to determine specific employees needed
2. Continue Manufacturing Day
3. K-12 involvement
4. Better utilization of present job services, agencies/department