



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES**  
**Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025 - 10AM to 12PM**  
**[Zoom Meeting Recording](#)**

*a division of the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation*

**1. Call to Order**

- Meeting called to order at 10:00 AM by Administrator Crystal Rohde
  - **Members Present:** Brooke Gilbertson – Representing Iron County, Kathy Halbur – Representing Rusk County, Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County, John Will – Representing Education (Northwood Technical College), Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce, Dick Hartmann – Representing Burnett County, Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County, Donna Walker – Representing Private Industry (Dairyland Power Cooperative), Michelle Johnson – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge), Carver Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Ilsa Hoeschen – Representing Education (UW-Superior), Nick Koverman – Representing Washburn County, Ken Disher – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy), Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB
  - **Others Present:** Jane Anklam + Mike Koutnik + Brian Finstad + Dave Peters – Northwest Sands Auto Trail Project, Kori Zenz – Iron River Area Chamber of Commerce, Jim Miller – Congressman Tiffany's Office, David Wierzba – Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Thomas Michels – DWD, Charlie Krysinski – Bad River, Crystal Rohde – Visions Northwest
  - **Members Absent:** Jeff Holte – Representing Bayfield County, Philomena Kebec - Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, John Righeimer – Representing Sawyer County

**2. Welcome and Introductions**

- Participants introduced themselves and their roles – including two new board members: Brooke Gilbertson and Kathy Halbur

**3. Approval of Draft January 8, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

- A motion was made by Geri D. to approve the January 8, 2025 minutes, a second was made by Michelle J. The motion carried unanimously.

**4. Presentation: Northwest Sands Auto Trail - A Story of Ecology, History and Culture**

[View the recording – presentation begins at 12:10](#)

- The map can be found online at:  
<https://arcgis.com/apps/instant/exhibit/index.html?appid=687cba6e1e13429e8da041ed615d618a>
- Project team member contact information for follow-up:
  - Jane Anklam: [janeanklam4@gmail.com](mailto:janeanklam4@gmail.com)
  - Mike Koutnik: [m.a.koutnik@gmail.com](mailto:m.a.koutnik@gmail.com)
  - Brian Finstad: [brian.finstad@yahoo.com](mailto:brian.finstad@yahoo.com)
  - Dave Peters: [davepeters2711@gmail.com](mailto:davepeters2711@gmail.com)

## 5. Key Partner Update

- David Wierzba – Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
  - David's update starts in the [recording](#) at 53:45. David's email is [david.wierzba@wedc.org](mailto:david.wierzba@wedc.org).
    - Fiscal year ends June 30<sup>th</sup> – new FY starts July 1. Applications coming in now will be consider in FY26.
    - Vibrant Spaces award recipients will be announced later in April.
    - Small Business Development Grant program announced previously – Medford/Gilman and the City of Ladysmith won these grants in the region.
    - Small Business Week coming up in May.
    - Attending Select USA in Washington DC with site selectors from across the world come. Will be helping promote Wisconsin and the region.
    - SizeUp program is an opportunity for small businesses to do market research. Learn more at <https://wedc.org/build-your-small-business/small-business-insights/>
    - Henry's Repeating Arms will be moving their corporate headquarters to the region (Ladysmith)
- Mari Kay-Nabozny – NWWIB
  - Mari's update starts in the [recording](#) at 57:33.
    - See the attached slides for Mari's written updates. Mari's email is [mari@nwwib.com](mailto:mari@nwwib.com).
    - Upcoming event: Community Childcare Conversation in Shell Lake on May 14<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/community-child-care-conversation-tickets-1280898595179?msocid=28d147a9858a644201ce53a284f565c4>
- Mike Hill – SBDC at UW-Superior
  - Mike's update starts in the [recording](#) at 1:14. Mike's email is [mike.hill@business.wisconsin.edu](mailto:mike.hill@business.wisconsin.edu).
    - Changed branding for SBDC.
    - A lot of things are still up in the air – renewed accreditation with the SBA. Still serving as we can – 150 clients in 2024, and almost 30 new clients so far in 2025.

## 6. Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Update

- See attached presentation/slides
- Learn more about BEAD: <https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/ServiceType/Broadband/GrantBEAD.aspx>

## 7. Lieutenant Governor's Small Business Academy - [Register today!](#)

- See attached presentation/slides – May 9<sup>th</sup> 8AM-12PM at Flat Creek Lodge in Hayward.

## 8. Around the Table/Other Business

- **Dale H.** – Xcel Energy is doing transmission expansion West of Prentice. New cell phone towers are being added across County (AT&T, Verizon, TMobile). River Valley Propane purchased property on 13 for a propane business. Third meeting happening with another housing developer and things are looking good for some additional housing. New coffee shop opened in downtown Prentice.
- **Ken D.** – 25-year plan of upgrading the “Bayfield Loop” that is 95% complete – good outcomes. Project from Ashland to Ironwood – rerouting from Ashland to Mellen to Ironwood. This will benefit almost a dozen other substations. Hoping timing doesn't conflict with Enbridge's Line 5 reroute. Bayfield County Economic Development committee hired a new director – Steve Gershman getting started with BCEDC. He is also serving Washburn County part-time.
- **Jim C.** – WEDC Capacity grant to assess the impact of the bridge closure. Issue will impact others outside of Superior/Douglas County. Trying to identify what the impact will be – hope will be that a financial assistance program can be developed for businesses that are impacted by the closure. Hope would be that this would be a true grant – not adding debt to businesses that are already distressed. Possible expansion of the program beyond Douglas County.

- **Carver H.** – The closure of Northland College – this will be a huge loss on many levels for the area. 112 employees will be losing their jobs by or before May 31<sup>st</sup>. NWWIB is working to help with the transition of these employees. Focus on helping students with transition also. The beautiful campus and buildings will be sold – hopefully as a whole, but will be challenging. Several movements to figure out what the next phase could look like for that property. Concern of the Chequamegon Bay area and all of the federal employees that live and work in the area – as well as many buildings that support these agencies. Ashland County is one of the poorest counties in the State of Wisconsin (69<sup>th</sup> out of 72) – this means that many non-profit organizations exist in the county. We expect that many will be struggling or not be able to survive the upcoming economy. About 5% of businesses that AADC serves are non-profits. Trying to anticipate how AADC can help through these challenges.
- **Michelle J.** – In process of permitting the relocation of Line 5 around Bad River Reservation – going to be a hearing in May because the EPA has ruled that the project may impact assets on the Bad River – specifically the wild rice resources. Virtual meeting to accept comments. Enbridge, Bad River, and the EPA will be testifying. The permitting is in a contested case status, meaning organizations have contested the case that the DNR has issued permits to Enbridge. Hearings will happen in August/Sept. in Ashland and Northwood Tech, and also in Dane County. More details to come. Project could possibly start within about a year from now. The Line 5 reroute project will have a \$135 million economic impact to the state – mainly focused on the region. This project will bring an influx of workers that will need places to stay - if Northland College dorms are available, might there be options to discuss. If there are any entities/organizations in the project area that have a great need, reach out to Michelle about grant opportunities through Enbridge. Michelle's email is [Michelle.Johnson@enbridge.com](mailto:Michelle.Johnson@enbridge.com).
- **David W.** – one additional item – Jeld-Wen facility is listed for sale (358,000 sq. ft.). Reach out to David if interested in learning more.
- **John W.** – Exciting time - coming up on commencement on May 16<sup>th</sup> – very successful year – up about 7% in FTE students and about 3% headcount. Puts the college above pre-pandemic levels for total headcount. We know this doesn't solve the workforce shortage – mobile education strategies and virtual education opportunities. These strategies seem to be hitting the mark. In collaboration with NWWIB and other organizations.

## 9. Confirm Next Meeting – July 23, 2025 (virtual) 10AM.

Meeting ended at 11:35AM.

# Visions Northwest

**Board of Directors Quarterly Meeting**

Wednesday, April 9th, 2025

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86075797478>

For Audio Only: 1-312-626-6799

Meeting ID: 860 7579 7478



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

PROUD PARTNER OF **WISCONSIN**  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS



New Visions Northwest Members:  
Brooke Gilbertson - Iron County  
Kathy Halbur - Rusk County

# APPROVAL OF DRAFT JANUARY 8, 2025 MINUTES



BOARD OF DIRECTORS QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, January 8th, 2025 - 10AM to 12PM  
Virtual Zoom Meeting

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*a division of the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation*

## 1. Call to Order

- Meeting called to order at 10:04 AM by Administrator Crystal Rohde
  - **Members Present:** Kelly Klein – Representing Iron County, Jeff Holte – Representing Bayfield County, Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County, John Will – Representing Education (Northwood Technical College), Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce, Dick Hartmann – Representing Burnett County, Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County, Donna Walker – Representing Private Industry (Dairyland Power Cooperative), Michelle Johnson – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge), Carver Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Ilsa Hoeschen – Representing Education (UW-Superior), Nick Koverman – Representing Washburn County
  - **Others Present:** David Wierzba – Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, Joy Melton – NWRPC, Adam Lamoureux – Sawyer County/LCO EDC, Lisa Westberg – NWWIB, Thomas Michels – DWD, Beth Gehred – Bad River, Sheldon Johnson – NWRPC, Crystal Rohde – Visions Northwest
  - **Members Absent:** Ken Disher – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy), Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB, Philomena Kebec – Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, John Righimer – Representing Sawyer County

## 2. Welcome and Introductions

- Participants introduced themselves and their roles – including two new board members: Jeff Holte and Nick Koverman.

## 3. Approval of Draft October 9th, 2024, Meeting Minutes

- A motion was made by Michelle J. to approve the October 9th, 2024, minutes, a second was made by Donna W. The motion carried unanimously.

## 4. Key Partner Update

- David Wierzba – Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
  - WEDC Economic Summit will take place in Green Bay October 15th- 16th:  
<https://wedc.org/about-us/events/wisconsin-economic-summit/>
  - WEDC provides funding to the Small Business Development Centers, UW-Superior and UW-Eau Claire. Starting new this year, small businesses with 20 employees or less are eligible to get free consulting if they need help with a business plan, financial statements, etc.
  - Small Business Development Grants will be announced in the next month.
  - Vibrant Spaces Grant will be announced in February.
  - WEDC is about halfway through the fiscal year, so projects should be brought forward soon (by mid-April) to be included in FY25 consideration.

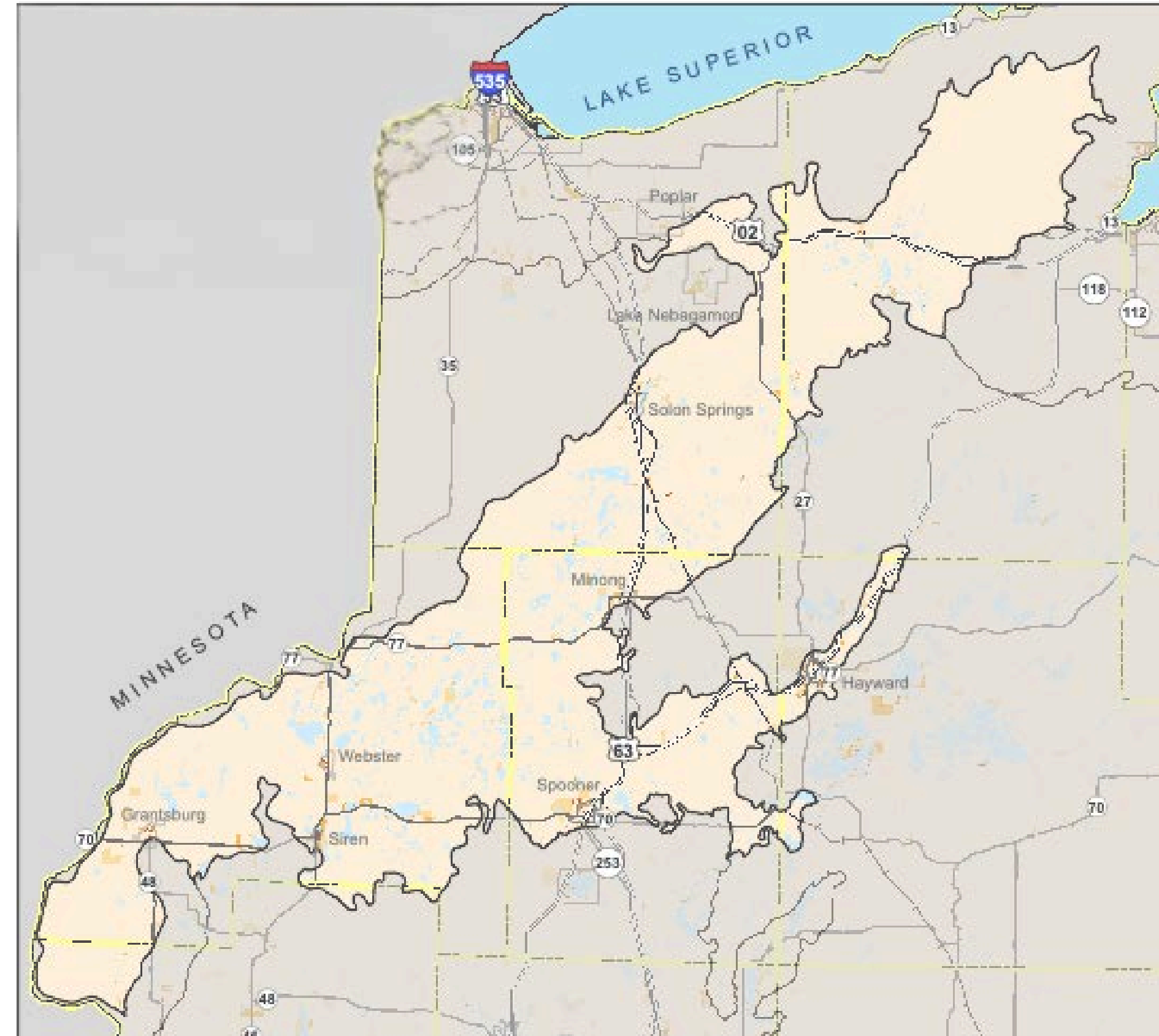
APPROVED



# PRESENTATION

## Northwest Sands Auto Trail - A Story of Ecology, History and Culture

Brian Finstad, Michael Koutnik, Jane Anklam, Dave Peters, and Dave Evenson



## Northwest Sands Auto Trail - A Story of Ecology, History and Culture

- How can such an effort be most engaging to the business community?
- How would you encourage incorporation of the amenities of your community into the Auto Trail experience?
- Is there anyone who would specifically be interested in a direct contact from the project team regarding the Auto Trail?



# KEY PARTNER UPDATE

**David Wierzba**

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation



# KEY PARTNER UPDATE

## Mari Kay-Nabozny

Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board



# ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE UPDATE (APRIL 2025)

## 1. Labor Market Conditions

- The Northwest WDA's unemployment rate rose to 6.0% in April 2025, up from 5.2% a year ago. This marks the largest year-over-year increase among all Wisconsin Workforce Development Areas.
- Counties like Burnett (7.7%), Douglas (6.2%), and Rusk (6.3%) are experiencing the highest rates, reflecting growing challenges in employment connectivity.

## 2. In-Demand and Emerging Sectors

- Continued growth is expected in construction, transportation, healthcare, and skilled trades. Notably, jobs in Natural Resources and Mining are projected to grow by over 46% by 2030, reflecting both economic and environmental sector expansion.
- The “Hot Jobs” list for WDA 7 includes:
  - Heavy Truck Drivers (\$49,278)
  - Maintenance Workers (\$39,163)
  - Welders (\$41,854)
  - Registered Nurses (\$69,673)
  - Industrial Machinery Mechanics (\$51,179).

# RECENT NWWIB PROGRAM UPDATES (PAST 3 MONTHS)

## 1. Short-Term Credentialed Academies Launch

- In partnership with regional training providers there are short-term training opportunities coming up in childcare, heavy equipment operator, CDL, and building science principles.

## 2. Childcare Workforce Development Initiatives

- New efforts are underway to:
  - Improve the image of childcare as a profession
  - Support entrepreneurial development of new childcare sites
  - Encourage participation in Wisconsin Shares and Partner Up programs.

## 3. Re-entry and Substance Recovery Focus

- NWWIB is rolling out training programs tailored to individuals re-entering the workforce, especially those in substance use recovery. These programs are intended to remove barriers and connect this underutilized labor pool with employers. There are also programs for training teachers aides, paramedics, social workers, and others on the frontline of substance misuse.

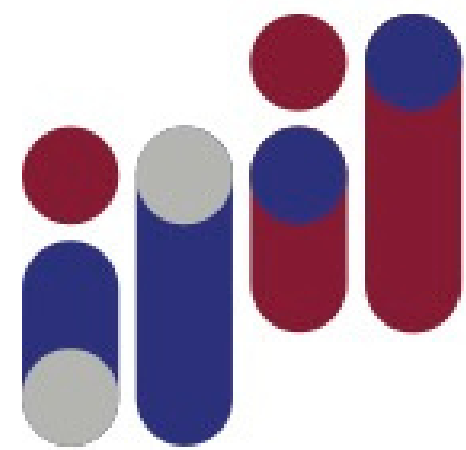
## 4. Industry Exploration Cohorts

- New industry cohorts focused on females, minorities, and non-traditional workers are being developed, especially in skilled trades and manufacturing sectors.

# KEY PARTNER UPDATE

**Mike Hill**

UW-Superior SBDC



**SBDC**

Wisconsin Small Business  
Development Center



# BROADBAND EQUITY ACCESS AND DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM



- The subgrant application phase began on January 13, 2025. Entities with approved LOIs were eligible to compete for BEAD funding for specific eligible locations in Wisconsin. Application phase (all rounds) should be concluded by this summer.
- In Round 1, the Commission received 425 applications, requesting just under \$3 billion in funding. The submitted applications include 188,926 of the 199,067 (95 percent) eligible locations. WI's total BEAD allocation is just over \$1 Billion.
- Construction is anticipated to begin in 2026. Projects are expected to be completed within four years of award, with all projects completed and locations connected by 2030.
- We will be meeting with our regional broadband committee next week to further discuss updates and next steps regarding BEAD.

# BROADBAND EQUITY ACCESS AND DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM

## A focus on the future with access to broadband...

- We will be engaging with the WEDC Office of Rural Prosperity and a hired consultant to help drive the success of a shared strategy towards innovation-based economic prosperity across Wisconsin.
- Unlocking strategic opportunities to leverage broadband for rural economic prosperity.
  - Some examples might include education, telemedicine, tech-based jobs, remote work, tourism, precision farming, etc.
- Speaking at an upcoming webinar on May 29th: Unleashing Rural Broadband's Potential: Workforce Development and Digital Navigation (also featuring the NWWIB CLICK Program) - information will be shared when available.

# LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S SMALL BUSINESS ACADEMY

REGISTRATION OPEN!

May 6-9



LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S

**Small Business  
Academy**



## Northwest Region In-Person Event

**Friday, May 9th - 8AM-12PM**  
**Flat Creek Lodge, Hayward**

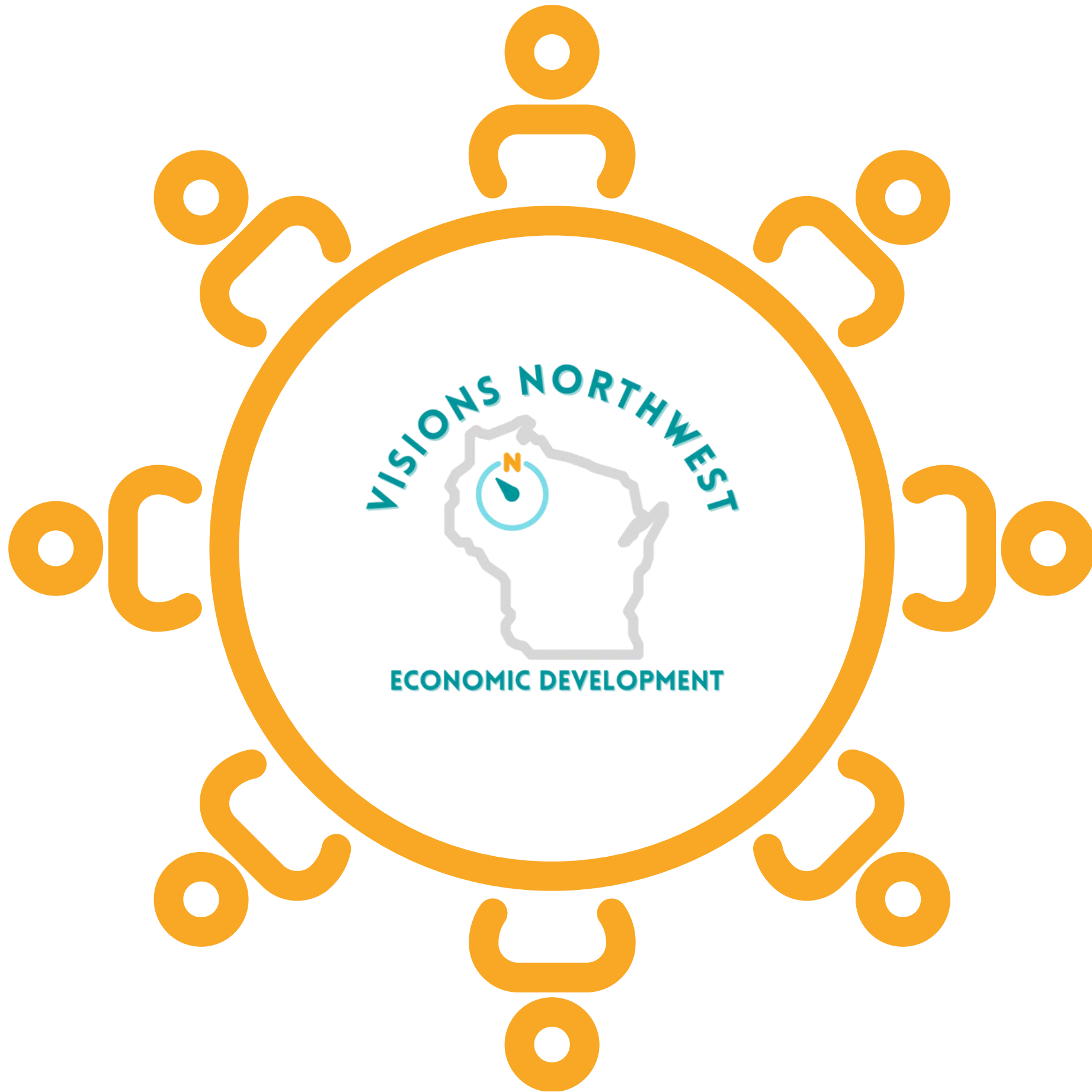
Small Business Topics:

- Financial Record Keeping + Taxes and Accounting
- Getting Started with Social Media & Website Design
- Business Succession: Planning for Transition

**REGISTER TODAY!**



# AROUND THE TABLE/OTHER BUSINESS



**We use this time on the agenda to welcome any updates from economic, workforce, community development, higher education, government, industry partners, etc.**

# CONFIRM NEXT MEETING DATE

July 23, 2025- 10AM-2PM - Virtual Meeting

2025

July

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

# ADJOURN

Thank you for your participation today! See you in July!

