



Visions Northwest Regional Economic Development Group
A Division of the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation

MEETING MINUTES
VISIONS NORTHWEST REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP
WITC, Hayward, WI
March 14, 2018

1. Meeting called to order at 10:05 AM by Chairman Kelly Klein.

2. **Roll Call/Introductions:**

Members Present: Kelly Klein – Representing Iron County, Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce, Betsey Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Scottie Sandstrom – Representing Bayfield County, Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County (ITV), Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB, Becky Haase – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge) (ITV), Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County, Joel Zimmerman – Representing Washburn County, Leo Naumann – Representing Private Industry (Jeff Foster Trucking), John Will – Representing Education (WITC)

Members Absent: Don Semler – Representing Sawyer County, John Richards – Representing Burnett County, Mike Bebeau – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy), Andy Albarado – Representing Rusk County, Jenice Meyer (for Renee Wachter) – Representing Education (NorthWERD Group)

Others Present: Thomas Michels – Department of Workforce Development, Jim Miller – Congressman Duffy's Office, Mary Ann Lippert – Department of Administration, Governor's Northern Office (ITV), Melissa Rabska and Mary Lois Bolka – Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board (NWWIB), Janet Clark – Senator Johnson's Office

Vacant Seats: Ashland County, Taylor County, Tribal Representative

3. **Approval of January 10, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the January 10th, 2018 meeting minutes was made by Geri D., a second was made by Scottie S. Motion carried unanimously.

4. **Administrator's Report**

Crystal noted from the report included in the packet a few of the highlights of the "behind the scenes effort" she has been working on including the approval for up to \$5,000 in funding support through WEDC for the upcoming [Superior Talent Initiative](#) through the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board. She also referenced regular participation in the Regional Leadership Council and the conversations at the state level regarding the [Think-Make-Happen](#) initiative, potential future funding structure for the regions, as well as the [Supply Chain Marketplace](#) initiative being led by New North.

5. **Inspire Northward Presentation**

Melissa Rabska, Inspire Northward Project Administrator and Crystal Rohde gave a presentation regarding Inspire Northward, the new community development tool that will connect students with industry across the Visions Northwest region. The presentation included a brief background of the project, recent WEDC grant award, timeline and included grant metrics and next steps for implementation. Project staff will be leveraging partnerships with county economic development, local chambers, community organizations, etc. to assist in the onboarding process of employers across the region. Once the employer platform is built and has a high level of participation, onboarding of the school districts/students will begin, likely in the Fall of 2018.

The presentation was also a "first look" at the new website, www.inspirenorthward.org. Please feel free to visit the site and share!

6. **2018 RiSE Sessions – Event Updates**

Crystal informed the group that the registration email went out for the [2018 RiSE Series](#) the first week of March to nearly 350 potential participants. She also noted that it is important for board members to PLEASE pass along the information to their email networks. The panels for the events are coming together thanks to the collaboration with local partners in each community. Crystal also asked that board members review the questions/discussion points that she distributed for feedback. Email Crystal with any additions!

7. **Wood Industry Collaborative - Update**

Crystal spoke regarding the topics discussed at the most recent meeting for the Wood Collaborative at the end of February. She noted that there will be an attempt to develop a comprehensive list of awareness/educational efforts at the K-12 level focused on the wood industry to help identify what gaps may exist within our local schools. She also discussed the Log-A-Load events coordinated by the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA) and the wood collaborative's intention to help promote these events – especially to schools that have not had events in the past. The collaborative will also begin distributing a e-newsletter to accompany the [Facebook Page](#) that has already been created to help share information with stakeholders and legislators.

An application is currently being drafted to apply for funding through the Forestry Funding Opportunity – UW Center for Cooperatives to expand a billboard project that is currently underway in the Grow North area. The project utilizes donated materials and labor to construct billboards focused on the benefits of forest management on county forest land. If the application is funded, the intention is to produce five additional billboards across the region(s).

8. **Around the Table**

- ❖ Crystal referred to an email that was recently distributed by Dale H. regarding outreach from a Prentice business who is concerned about the rail service in Price County. Kelly K. noted that the Rail Transit Commission is currently conducting a market analysis that will be completed soon. Jim M. noted that the rail lines need more to haul than just wood to actually make money. He is asking for those that have solutions or actual proposals to please bring them forward to his office.
- ❖ Scottie Sandstrom referenced an upcoming career day at Drummond High School on March 29th. He also passed around a "Love where you work." flyer highlighting the fiber optic bandwidth and technology opportunities that exist in [Bayfield County](#), making it a great place to telecommute, run a home-based business, or build your brick & mortar business. He also noted the possible legislation for each county to have an appointed person to work with municipalities to encourage telecommuting. With this legislation there would be a deliberateness and consistency in promoting the effort of telecommuting opportunities.
- ❖ Mari Kay Nabozny noted the upcoming Superior Talent Initiative (3/15/18-3/17/18) focused on bringing potential high-level health care industry degree students into the Chequamegon Bay area to showcase the opportunities and quality of life that exist. Mari also referenced a culinary institute being done through the county jail in Ashland. She noted that corrections themed programs are something we will likely see more of as far as workforce initiatives go in the near future. Mari also spoke of two grant opportunities being pursued for small food providers and local food markets to help scale their operations. There is another upcoming Hospitality Summit scheduled for March 29th and can be access remotely from three different WITC locations. Contact Mary Lois Bolka for more information at mbolka@nwwib.com.
- ❖ Janet Clark inquired about the "[Stop the Bleed](#)" campaign in our area and noted that she could be a resource for further information. Stop the Bleed is intended to cultivate grassroots efforts that encourage bystanders to become trained, equipped, and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives.
- ❖ MaryAnn Lippert reminded participants – "I am your advocate!" in the north! She encouraged everyone to forward e-newsletters to their networks on a regular basis to help share information. She referenced the Supply Chain Marketplace and the many benefits to registration including learning about opportunities for suppliers in your area. She also provided a brief update on the \$50 million [Rural Economic Development](#) initiative that is currently working its way through the Senate. She encouraged those in Sawyer, Rusk, and Taylor counties to contact Senator Petrowski to support the initiative and the need for Republican support in the Senate. MaryAnn noted that current broadband expansion grants are under review and if you missed this opportunity, to start planning now for the next round. She also highlighted two upcoming events – the [Regional Economic Indicator Forum](#) on April 3rd at the DECC in Duluth, and the [WI Rural Summit](#) on April 18-19 in Baraboo. Information was shared with members after the meeting regarding the events. Finally, MaryAnn is seeking information from you on childcare – "share the good, the bad, and the ugly" to help her make a case for child care issues across the north.

- ❖ Betsey Harries discussed a recent forum on opioid/meth addiction in Ashland County and the need for less talk and more action. They are currently forming a community action plan that includes more transitional housing opportunities for those recovering from addiction.
- ❖ John Will talked about the new programming being offered soon through WITC including a Pharmacy Technician Program and Utility Technician Program as well as a CDLA truck driving program. The Pharmacy Tech program is going to be offered as a night course, designed for working individuals. The Utility Tech program will be a one-year technical diploma.

9. Confirm Next Meeting Date

The next Visions Northwest meeting will take place on May 9th, 2018 at WITC Hayward at 10:00 AM.

10. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Geri D.; with a second by Dale H.