



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

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**MEETING MINUTES**  
**VISIONS NORTHWEST REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GROUP**  
**WITC, Hayward, WI**  
**January 8, 2020**

1. Meeting called to order at 10:07 AM by Chairman Kelly Klein.

2. **Roll Call/Introductions:**

**Members Present:** Kelly Klein – Representing Iron County, Cole Rabska – Representing Bayfield County, Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County (remote), Leo Naumann – Representing Private Industry (Jeff Foster Trucking), John Richards – Representing Burnett County, Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce, Joel Zimmerman – Representing Washburn County (remote), John Will – Representing Education (WITC), Lynn Fitch – Representing Sawyer County, Mike Bebeau – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy)

**Members Absent:** Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County, Becky Haase – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge), Andy Albarado – Representing Rusk County, Betsey Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB, Jenice Meyer – Representing Education (NorthWERD Group)

**Others Present:** Jim Miller – Senator Johnson’s Office, Dick Hartmann – Representing Burnett County, Lance Ausing – Representing WEDC, Andy Donahue – Representing Small Business Development Corporation at UW-Superior

**Vacant Seats:** Ashland County, Taylor County, Tribal Representative

3. **Approval of October 9, 2019 Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019 meeting minutes was made by Geri D.; a second was made by Cole R. Motion carried unanimously.

4. **SWOT Results Discussion and Next Steps**

Crystal outlined the top three priorities from the DRAFT SWOT handout including:

1. Workforce Strategies: Attraction of new and Utilization of Existing
  - a. Drug issues (as it relates to workforce) – where can we as a regional economic development entity provide support and have the most impact.
2. Need for More Workforce Housing
3. Broadband/Cellular Coverage | Infrastructure

Next steps include identification of potential projects that align with these priorities.

Potential projects are already underway for priority 1 (regarding utilization of our current workforce), including support for the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development’s application for a federal grant opportunity *Support to Communities: Fostering Opioid Recovery Through Workforce Development*. If awarded, Visions Northwest would provide assistance in the Participating Partnership representing the Northwest Support to Communities Council. Another project Visions Northwest anticipates supporting in 2020 (focused on workforce attraction) through our partnership with the Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board is the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) [Wisconsin Express Program](#). Wisconsin Express is a one-week cultural immersion

experience designed to give health professions students an opportunity to study firsthand the diverse local and regional healthcare innovations and challenges in Wisconsin communities. Multidisciplinary groups of 6-12 students explore the region's cultural diversity and healthcare, developing strategies for intercultural and interprofessional effectiveness in healthcare practice. Throughout the week, participants have opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their experiences. There are two sessions scheduled in our region this year; one in Hayward, and the other in Ashland. For more information, visit: <https://ahec.wisc.edu/ahec-for-students/wisconsin-express/>

As a reminder for priority 2, the Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA) is holding the Workforce Housing - Session 2: *Financing Workforce Housing: Exploring Program Options and Models* on February 5, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. – Madison Club, Madison. This program is being held the day prior to the Governor's Conference on Economic Development which will focus on Social Impact Investing. For more information, visit: <http://www.weda.org/events/event-list/>

Discussion around the table occurred regarding the need for rural transportation infrastructure to be a topic for Superior Days, etc. Crystal agreed to follow-up with area leaders who attend the legislative days in Madison and inquire about putting forward a letter of overall concern for rural transportation needs across our region.

#### **5. Wood Industry Collaborative Update**

An application (referred to copy in packet) was submitted to WEDC's Capacity Building Grant Program on November 1<sup>st</sup> requesting \$15,000 to match support provided by the Earl St. John Fund, Grow North EDO, Wisconsin County Forests Association, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, and Northwest Regional Planning Commission for a Discover Mediaworks Project. We are waiting on a response from WEDC on the potential award. The Wood Industry Collaborative is scheduled to meet at the Minocqua Public Library on Tuesday, January 28<sup>th</sup> at 10:30AM to discuss this project as well as an upcoming 2020 Timber Tour.

#### **6. Inspire Northward/Career Ready Wisconsin and Pathways WI**

##### *Inspire Northward/Career Ready Wisconsin*

This month pilot schools will be re-activated on Inspire Northward (Ashland, Bayfield, Chequamegon, Drummond, Hayward, Maple, Mercer, Northwoods, Phillips, Prentice, Siren, Solon Springs, and Superior). These are the districts that staff already has a signed MOU. We have also simplified the MOU for new districts and will begin outreach also this month. Once the signed MOU is in hand identifying district staff to oversee communication, the district will be activated on Inspire Northward.

Inspire staff has also simplified the sign-up form for business partners/employers. We will be sending out emails to area businesses with a call to action to allow our staff to create a profile on their behalf. This will allow the company visibility on the platform. For further engagement and to offer Career Based Learning Opportunities (i.e. career coaching or job shadowing), additional follow-up and coordination with staff will be required. To meet one of our grant metrics, we need approximately 110 more businesses to sign up on the platform.

Lance with WEDC offered insight regarding the FabLab grant and some potential changes coming to the program to allow for trade and skill development.

##### *Pathways Wisconsin*

Many may recall Dan Miller, Director for the Pathways Wisconsin Indianhead region – the JP Morgan Chase Grant that supported the Indianhead pilot project ended in December of 2019. The initiative will be rolling out statewide beginning in 2020 due to Department of Public Instruction Carl Perkins funds being redirected to support this effort. Funding will be available to CESAs and regions to implement State Endorsed Regional Career Pathways (SERCPs). Through Dan's work, our region has SERCPs in Nursing, Construction, and Manufacturing with multiple school districts offering them. Visions Northwest will be partnering with the Momentum West region and area CESAs to determine the best approach. We have a meeting scheduled for 1-15-20 to discuss the grant from DPI which should be available sometime in February, due in April, with funding to begin July 1. More to come in the near future regarding this topic...

#### **7. 2020 RI&E Series – Topic Discussion**

The Visions Northwest Executive Committee held a conference call on 12-18-19 to discuss RI&E 2020. Considering workforce is our number one priority, we discussed our aging population ("Hire the Retired") and other workforce-related topics including how to find, train, and retain talent as our focus for this year. After reaching out to AARP

and UW-Extension staff that were featured in a [recent article](#) in WPR, *UW-Extension: Older Adults Could Help Fill Vacant Jobs / Report Shows Increase Of Adults 55 And Older Engaged In Workforce*, we learned that there is an upcoming Summit being scheduled in our region that will cover this and many other economic development topics. The **Chequamegon Bay Economic Development Summit**, coordinated by local UW-Extension and the University Center and UW-Madison, is scheduled for **April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 at the Great Lakes Northern Visitor Center**.

After further discussion among the Executive Committee, we have decided to postpone RISe (possibly until September/October in the southern part of the region) until we know more outcomes of the summit, including who attended, what topics were discussed, etc. It is important to prevent duplication and oversaturation of events that have the same focus in the region.

Crystal has emailed the state and local coordinators of the upcoming summit expressing our willingness to partner and provide support with outreach, planning, etc. Once more information becomes available, Crystal will share it with board members and partners.

#### **8. Around the Table**

As a result of a recent inquiry from Bayfield County, Crystal will develop guidelines for board members and partners that are interested in including an ad in the Visions Northwest Quarterly Beacon (sent March, June, September, and December) to 375 regional stakeholders.

Dick Hartmann was welcomed by the group as he starts his career with Burnett County as the Executive Director of their Economic Development Organization. We look forward to working with you and having you at future meetings, Dick!

John Will stated that WITC has been working on enrollment and developing strategies for access.

Cole Rabska shared that the Wisconsin Procurement Institute will be providing presentations for small businesses on government contracting on April 14<sup>th</sup> in Bayfield County.

Joel Zimmerman discussed the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Washburn County EDC Banquet coming up on April 1<sup>st</sup> at Heartwood Resort and Conference Center. They will be featuring Andrew Davis, author of Town, Inc. as the keynote speaker. If others in the region want to "sub-lease" Andrew for part of the day to work with your communities, please contact Joel directly at [joelz@washburncountyedc.org](mailto:joelz@washburncountyedc.org).

Dale Heikkinen mentioned that broadband in Prentice is expanding with two new AT&T towers being erected as well as additional hardware infrastructure being installed by Norvado. He also noted that the \$8 million school addition is almost completed.

Lynn Fitch noted that Sawyer County EDC is still working with WITC to deliver training such as construction foundations, soft skills, etc. at the Sawyer County Jail to help with recidivism/re-entry. She also mentioned a potential culinary program through a partnership with LCO Community College. Sawyer County/LCO EDC is also looking to hire a ¾ to full time director. Sawyer County/LCO EDC, Hayward Area Chamber of Commerce, and Hayward Lakes teamed up recently to create an "I Choose Sawyer County" promotional video – check it out here: <https://vimeo.com/381692580/3701e96ee8> or <https://youtu.be/jie3poMZVbA>.

Geri Dresen announced the upcoming Northern Pines Sled Dog Race to be held on Saturday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in Iron River. Free family-friendly events will be hosted in the heated event center that also include warm food and an opportunity to meet the Northern Pines Sled Dog Race mushers on Friday evening. For more information, please visit: <http://www.northernpinessdr.com/index.html>

#### **9. Confirm Next Meeting Date**

The next Visions Northwest meeting will take place on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at WITC Hayward at 10:00 AM.

#### **10. Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 11:47AM.