



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
January 9, 2019

1. Meeting called to order at 10:08 AM by Chairman Kelly Klein.

2. **Roll Call/Introductions:**

Members Present: Kelly Klein – Representing Iron County, Jenice Meyer – Representing Education (ITV) (NorthWERD Group), Cole Rabska – Representing Bayfield County, Dale Heikkinen – Representing Price County (ITV), Becky Haase – Representing Private Industry (Enbridge), Leo Naumann – Representing Private Industry (Jeff Foster Trucking), John Richards – Representing Burnett County, John Will – Representing Education (WITC)

Members Absent: Lynn Fitch – Representing Sawyer County, Geri Dresen – Representing Chambers of Commerce, Betsey Harries – Representing Economic Development Organizations, Mari Kay-Nabozny – Representing NWWIB, Jim Caesar – Representing Douglas County, Joel Zimmerman – Representing Washburn County, Mike Bebeau – Representing Private Industry (Xcel Energy), Andy Albarado – Representing Rusk County

Others Present: Thomas Michels – Department of Workforce Development, Jim Miller and Stacey Hessel – Congressman Duffy's Office, Marie Steenlage – Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), Janet Clark – Senator Johnson's Office

Vacant Seats: Ashland County, Taylor County, Tribal Representative

3. **Approval of November 14, 2018 Meeting Minutes**

A motion to approve the November 14th, 2018 meeting minutes was made by John W.; a second was made by Becky H. Motion carried unanimously.

4. **Presentation: Wisconsin's and Northwest Wisconsin's Demographics and Economy**

Thomas Michels with the Department of Workforce Development gave a comprehensive overview of the region's demographics and economy. The outlook shows a decrease in the region's overall population. The region is also projected to have a substantial increase in the amount of population 65 years of age and older, while numbers continually decline for the population ages 18-24 throughout the majority of our 10 counties. The region also has a noticeable gap in wages in comparison to the rest of the state.

View the presentation [here](#). Any questions regarding the data presented can be directed to Thomas Michels at 715.392.1610 or Thomas.Michels@dwd.wisconsin.gov.

5. **Visions Northwest Key Initiative Updates**

2019 RIsE Series Discussion

Crystal provided a summary of the previous three years of sessions. The topics included:

- Regional Insights on the Economy – Economic Development, Workforce, and Education
- A Look at Young Professionals, Talent, and Attraction in Northwest Wisconsin
- Developing Attractive Communities in Northwest Wisconsin

The Visions Northwest Executive Committee will be meeting on 1/17/19 to discuss this year's focus and details of the series. Some ideas generated during the meeting included:

- Continuing the conversation/focus on community attraction and adding a housing element
- Utilizing the platform to promote Inspire and the connection between employers and the youth of the region
- Focusing on the retirement population of the region as a potential ASSET to ongoing workforce issues and concerns – allowing an open discussion on the opportunity to shift the conversation.
- Any additional topics/priorities can be submitted to Crystal prior to the 1/17/19 meeting for further discussion.

Enbridge and WITC both verbally committed sponsorship of the 2019 RISE Series. Thank you for your ongoing support!!!

Inspire Update

Crystal highlighted a graphic update provided by Inspire Northward Administrator Melissa Rabska. Since the last update provided to the board, two school districts have been activated including Bayfield and Siren. Several of the other pilot schools should be activated before the end of the school year. CESA trainings for ACP staff are scheduled for this month. Targeted outreach to employers will continue, as well technical assistance, and collaboration with local and regional partners to promote the platform.

Wood Industry Collaborative - Update

The collaborative is currently exploring ways that our group can provide education and awareness of the Northern Wisconsin wood products industry to the new administration in 2019. Ideas include a scheduled day in Madison to meet with the incoming department secretaries to deliver a broad and consistent message and to gauge interest and potential participation in a "Timber Tour" welcoming the departments to Northern Wisconsin to see what we do!

The collaborative is also still seeking funding to move forward a marketing project under the "Know Your Wisconsin" package that Discover Wisconsin provides. Recent conversations with WEDC staff sound promising for support of the project if match funding can be secured.

The next Wood Collaborative meeting is scheduled for 1.23.19 at Minocqua Brewing Company from 10:30AM to 12:30PM. We will welcome some new faces at the meeting this month including Scott Suder from the Wisconsin Paper Council.

6. 2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Crystal provided hard copies of the 2018 update to the Northwest Wisconsin Visions for Prosperity: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. The Visions Northwest board serves as the strategy committee for the CEDS. In 2020, the strategy will need a full update including a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Aspirations (SWOT) analysis. From the analysis, priorities and goals will be set forth for the next five-year plan. Please mark Wednesday, **October 9th, 2019** on your calendars to participate in a full day planning session in Hayward – this will be the first (and most important) step in revising the 2020 CEDS for Northwest Wisconsin.

7. Around the Table

- ❖ Jim Miller stated that Hayward area will be starting their Placemaking process in March. Congressman Duffy is planning the Hunger and Homelessness event. Jim also spoke to our rural communities staying viable as population continues to decline in the region, noting that we may need to assess how welcoming we are to immigrants that could potentially solve some of the workforce issues.
- ❖ Joh Will noted an increase in enrollment at WITC, along with the development of new programming that includes shorter term pathways and certifications. A possible summit and/or seminar(s) focusing on automation will likely be hosted by WITC in the coming year. WITC continues to reach further into the population to discover training opportunities for those in correctional facilities. They have also developed the first ever programming for people with cognitive disabilities focused on the hospitality industry.

- ❖ Marie Steenlage assured that WEDC is “business as usual” despite the recent change in administration. Any applications that are looking to be considered in the FY19 funding cycle should be in the “hopper” by April 1st, 2019. FabLab grants will be reviewed late this Spring.
- ❖ Janet Clark spoke to Senator Johnson’s [Joseph Project](#). The Joseph Project is a faith-based jobs initiative to connect people with jobs. Participants go through a weeklong life skills training program and then are offered a chance to interview with companies looking to hire. The Joseph Project currently exists in Milwaukee and is being replicated in Wausau and Green Bay this year.
- ❖ John Richards said that many people in the region are not retiring, but doing something *different*. The retirement-age population is looking for non-traditional hours and a more flexible environment, but are not looking to take up “golf” and only spend time doing leisure activities. This population wants to work, but not in the traditional 40-hour week sense. It may benefit employers in the region to explore this opportunity.

8. Confirm Next Meeting Date

The next Visions Northwest meeting will take place on April 10th, 2019 at WITC Hayward at 10:00 AM.

9. Adjourn

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:03PM was made by Becky H.; with a second by John R.