

**Rural Development Council (RDC) Meeting**  
**TEAMS meeting Bismarck ND 58501**  
**April 13, 2022, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.**

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**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Teran Doerr	Dawn Mandt
Shawn Kessel	Daniel Stenberg
Gwen Crawford	Antoinette Heier
KayCee Lindsey	Lindsey Lipp
Senator Janne Myrdal	Megan Laudenschlager
Carol Peterson	

**GUESTS PRESENT**

Maria Effertz Hanson  
Tracey Miller  
Katie Ralston  
Melinda Padilla Lynch

**CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME**

Chairperson Doerr called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., welcoming members and guests.

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

**Minutes**

**MOTION:** It was moved by Daniel Stenberg, seconded by Megan Laudenschlager to approve the Rural Development Council minutes of November 23, 2021. Motion carried.

**Nominating Committee**

The current position of chairperson will be vacant in June and will require the nominating committee of Shawn, Dawn, and Teran to provide a name to fill that position, along with names for a vice chair, and two members at large that are to be on the executive committee. Teran will stay on the council as past chair.

**MOTION:** It was moved by Megan Laudenschlager, seconded by KayCee Lindsey to form a nominating committee that would provide names to the council for chair, vice chair and two members at large for the executive committee. Motion carried.

**COMMERCE STRATEGY REVIEW**

**Shawn Kessel**

Shawn discussed Commerce's strategy going into the next biennium.

**Commerce opportunities to attract, retain, and expand wealth in ND to be or have the:**

1. Highest GDP
2. First carbon neutral state
3. Nation's leading autonomy authority
4. Global Brand in recruiting and retaining critical workforce
5. Smartest communities in the nation in workforce and infrastructure (MSI goals)

**Commerce strategy on achieving the goals:**

1. Equipping Commerce to be successful
2. Positioning the agency to outcompete all other states
3. A world without constraints
4. Legislative confidence
5. Community buy in

6. Agricultural policy reform – bi products that are being sold have high transportation costs. Build awareness for off takers for those value-added ag products.
7. Billions in infrastructure investment for clean energy corridors.
8. Smart communities

**Reaching the Goals:**

1. Vision to Action
2. Data Driven – data drives opportunity
3. Aggressive – Strong messaging, community mentorship, systems level workforce development and extraordinary marketing approach
4. Action oriented – KPI driven

**HOUSING ISSUES**  
**Rural Housing Task Force**  
**Dawn Mandt**

A Rural Housing Task Force created due to the barriers of construction in rural development. The task force is made up of leadership from Bank of ND, Housing Finance, nonprofit developers, and an economist that have met six times and are currently finalizing the drafted recommendations to create an advocacy plan, providing those recommendation to the legislators this upcoming legislative session.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) SCORING & RANKING**  
**Maria Effertz**

The federal Housing Urban Development (HUD) program is provided to the State of ND for low to moderate income public, public infrastructure, and economic development with several restrictions.

This year, the Department of Commerce will conduct scoring and ranking processes of all CDBG projects, along with the state partners from the Department of Environmental Quality, State Water Commission, Department of Health, Housing Finance.

A few recommendations will be added to the program, lifting the cap, including every region to receive a certain amount of dollars. The state total funding remains at \$4 million. Timeline consists of finishing up the action plan this week, and into the beginning of May, with then a move to public comment.

**MAIN STREET INITIATIVE (MSI)**  
**Summit – Save the Date**  
**Grants – Pip, Vibrancy, EDA**

This year, the Main Street Initiative (MSI) Summit will have free registration for the public and will be held in Bismarck on October 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>. The summit will focus on workforce with more breakout sessions, more attendee engagement and discussion for community improvement and community attraction for workforce.

Previously, MSI was aligned within the ED&F Division; looking ahead it will be housed in the Community Services Division, being more aligned with the federal granting processes.

The **MSI Partners in Planning (PiP) Grant Program** supports nonprofit organizations and/or local governments in completing a comprehensive plan or economic development/diversification strategic plan. Fourteen PiP grants were distributed in 2021. A community that has an active plan within the last five years can also submit a component plan.

The **MSI Vibrancy Grant Program** supports local efforts increasing community vibrancy by providing seed funding for a small project to build momentum and inspire additional projects. Twenty – five vibrancy grants were distributed in 2021.

A \$1 million **EDA federal planning grant** was awarded to Commerce, to be administered through the MSI program for placemaking in communities.

New commerce employee, Melinda Padilla Lynch, will work with the EDA Grant Program.

- **Placemaking** - Commerce will help communities move to the road of getting the help they need for placemaking to go out and get the hire they need.
  - **GAP Plan (Grant Action Plan)** – future funding plan that Commerce will be rolling out.
  - **League of Cities** working with them for partnerships for communities.
  - **Artists on Main Program** was created in 2021, offering technical assistance and funding to develop and install art for one North Dakota MSI applicant or community. Bowman County Development Corporation was the recipient in 2021. The program will be expanding to five communities in the next two years.
- In 2022, expectations are to expand the **Artist on Main** Program to more communities with steps taken to:
- Visit with Council on the Art.
  - Statewide letter of intent process
  - Eight to ten questions for communities to answer on the artist’s needs for the community.
  - Youth engagement in the process
  - “Creative Placemaking Session”
  - Communities that have won awards - revisit those communities and ask if they are looking for more help.

**WORKFORCE GRANTS**  
**Portal for the application process**  
**Katie Ralston Howe**

\$20 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars was awarded to ND and to be deployed to the grant programs.

**REGIONAL WORKFORCE INNOVATION PROGRAM (RWIP) - \$15 Million total**

- Regional partnerships; 1 application per region
- 25% match
- Broad focus
- Sustainable initiatives
- Milestone – based funding model
- Application deadline is July 30

**TECHNICAL SKILLS TRAINING GRANT - \$3 Million total**

- 1:1 match
- Two Tracks
  - Track A - Accelerated reskilling (up to \$100,000)
  - Track B - Internal upskilling, safety training (up to \$50,000)
- Multiple funding windows
  - Round 1 – July 7, 2022

- Round 2 – September 29, 2022
- Round 3 – December 15, 2022
- Round 4 – March 9, 2023

#### **WORKFORCE INNOVATION GRANT - \$2 Million total**

- 1:1 match
- Awards will range from \$25,000- \$250,000
- 3 categories
  - Innovative or unconventional initiatives
  - Recruitment in areas of high unemployment
  - Match for visa costs for industries most impacted by pandemic

### **WORKFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Katie Ralston Howe**

WDC, 33-member board made of up business, local officials, state government officials, and prepping for the legislative session. Cannot lobby, but advocate for recommendations. Some will be designed for legislative request and others will be for communities to take on and own in their own workforce development initiatives.

#### **Career Exploration and Technical Skills Gap**

- CTE Centers, clarify and support the current initiative
- Career Exploration – increased focus in schools
- Apprenticeships, internships, and job shadow
- Business and education collaboration

#### **Recruitment and Retention**

- Sustained funding for talent attraction initiatives
- Develop mechanism for local workforce funding
- Hiring regional recruiters
- Statewide campaign for businesses to include service industry experience in preferred minimum job qualifications

#### **Removing Barriers**

- Continued support for previously proposed justice involved pilot program
- Childcare
- Digital literacy skill gaps
- New American Task Force
- Native American workforce support
- Citizens without GEDs

#### **Occupational Licensure Reform**

- Create central listing of all boards
- Joining new interstate compact to promote mobility
- Fair chance laws
- Remove vague or generic terms such moral turpitude and good character
- Establish and make public criminal convictions that will disqualify an applicant from obtaining a license
- Establish an ongoing system for data collection

**Statewide impact**

- Encourage Private Sector Partnership
- Coordinate and Maximize Federal Resources
- Scalable Solutions
- Balance current and future needs
- Consider Priorities vs Programs

**Guiding Principle**

What makes the most sense to put resources behind right now and what makes sense for the WDC to lead vs. support.

**Additional considerations**

- Build on work completed to date where possible
- Recommend actionable strategies both short and long term
- Determine the metrics we will use to measure success

**Partners and Process**

- Engage early
- Collaborate
- Work to understand what's possible
- Discuss process for achievement

**Goal**

- 5-10 recommendations total, plus endorsements
- Comprehensive, including policy changes and/or funding requests
- Appropriate agencies must be on board with funding requests as these will impact their budgets, staff to administer funds.

**Timeline**

3/3/2022 – Present preliminary recommendations

6/2/2022 – Present short list of comprehensive recommendations, WDC will vote to approve

6/15/2022 – Recommendations sent to Governor's office

**RDC HANDBOOK**

**Shawn Kessel**

Shawn walked members through a newly created council member handbook produced by Sherri Frieze. This tool will be used during new member orientations that will be conducted by Shawn, conference through the Microsoft TEAMS platform.

**ADJOURN**

With no further business for discussion, the meeting was adjourned unanimously at 3:30 p.m.