

Q4 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION
via TEAMS MEETING
Monday, December 4, 2023
12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

Economic Development Foundation members present: Tom Campbell, Bruce Gjovig, Cassidy Hjelmstad, Lyn James, Megan Langley, Spencer Marchand, Frank Matus, Kevin Müller, Vicki Monsen, John Nagel, Lindsey Narum, Anna Nelson, Mike Seminary, Thomas Stromme

Commerce staff present: Joshua Teigen, Rich Garman, Sara Otte Coleman, Katie Ralston Howe, Maria Effertz, Alison Widmer, Sherri Frieze

WELCOME and ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Lyn James, Chairperson called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m., welcoming the Economic Development Foundation members and guests. Roll call was conducted.

MINUTES

Motion: It was moved by Bruce Gjovig, seconded by Spencer Marchand, to approve the minutes of September 26, 2023.

Motion: It was moved by Tom Campbell, seconded by Cassidy Hjelmstad, to approve the financial report of December 1, 2023.

BOARD HISTORY AND DISCUSSION TO MOVE FORWARD

Commissioner Teigen

Commissioner Teigen discussed a progressive path the foundation could take that will create processes that are forward-thinking vs rear view mirror thinking.

Foundation points of interest

- 1.) Why to exist
- 2.) Strategic initiatives
- 3.) Commerce's role
- 4.) Policy recommendations

Member discussion

- 1.) Arbitrary metrics vs. valuable metrics
- 2.) Performance Measures & Accountability Standards per century code language
- 3.) Policy focus
- 4.) Strategy focus
- 5.) Actions vs. outcomes
- 6.) Advocating legislatively for Commerce
- 7.) Long term value of the Foundation

January meeting of focus

- 1.) Where is the state going
- 2.) What role does Commerce play in that future role
- 3.) What resources will it take for Commerce/Foundation to help influence the future state for policy and fundraising.

TOURISM

Sara Otte Coleman, Director

Tourism/Marketing Policy Changes

- Consistent Primary Sector definition for tourism. – Add tourism to Chapter 1149 to allow access to PACE and other BND programs
- Consistent Lodging Tax across all sectors
 - To include camping (state parks and others) and short-term stays (Airbnb)
- Appetite to consider additional hospitality taxes to support needs
Marketing, maintenance, development

WORKFORCE

Katie Ralston Howe, Director

Within the last couple of years, the division has been transformed under the guidance of the board. Katie spoke of opportunities within the division for workforce training/career exploration, and talent attraction.

Workforce Training & Career Exploration

- Operation Intern
 - Need to increase access
 - Funding does not meet demand

Tribal College Grant

Technical Skills Training Grant

- Need to increase awareness and utilization

Talent Attraction

- Find the Good Life
 - Building out programmatic activities and investments of funds
 - Goals to increase direct employer engagement & to expedite conversion time

Broad Workforce Support

- Regional Workforce Impact Program
 - Continue to transform program in response to local needs, requests, etc.

Service

- AmeriCorps
 - Exploring stronger connections between service opportunities and workforce (WIOA)

Office of Legal Immigration

- Stakeholder engagement & research underway
 - New American workforce grant will launch in 2024

Workforce Development Council

Mission – To advise the Governor and the public concerning nature and extent of workforce needs; identify ways to address those needs.

Themes

- Earlier and more diverse career exploration
- Addressing the technical skills gap
- Removing barriers to employment
- Recruitment and retention of ND workers
- Occupational licensure reform

Subcommittees meet monthly on each of the 5 themes and then bringing the recommendations to the full workforce development council at quarterly meetings.

Recommendations

- 5-10 total + endorsements
 - Building on success in 2023 legislative session
- Timeline: Approve and release summer/early fall 2024
- Developed by subcommittees in partnership with multiple agencies, legislators, etc.

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Maria Effertz, Director

The Division of Community Services was a standalone agency before combining with other Commerce divisions.

Programs within the division include:

Community Development and Rural Sustainability
Community Development Block Grant
Community Service Block Grant
Weatherization (delivery to Community Action agencies)
LIHEAP – Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (delivery to Community Action agencies)
Renaissance Zone
Building Codes
ADA Compliance
State Energy Program (state and federal grants)

The Rural Development Council (RDC) helps guide the work for community development. Community is critical for everything in Commerce.

Pilot programs were conducted last year:

- Housing/Slum & Blight removal
- Sustainable Foods Access and Delivery

Momentum Funds through the Commerce Department allowed:

- Facility Planning Grants
- Vibrancy Grants
- Outreach and Education
- Review and proactive support through community education

The RDC subcommittees met this past summer and brought forth items to focus on legislatively

- Administrative allowable on grants
- Rural preference points for program/grants
- Definition of “North Dakota Rural.”

Administrative discussion points for encouragement in Commerce

- Minimum six-week application opening for grants
- Flexibility for match requirements for rural communities
- RDC ex-officio membership for other Governor appointed committees
- Statewide data repository and research support for rural

A stronger conversation in January with the RDC will happen regarding these items.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Alison Widmer, Director

As the support division, the Fiscal/Administrative division helps other divisions in achieving their strategic goals through, Fiscal Services, Human Resources, and Information Technology.

Efficiencies:

- The Human Resources Department is working with the state Office of Management and Budget agency to shorten the online resume/application process for applying for a job in ten minutes or less.
- Fiscal Services has implemented an internal shared linked email inbox for better service with fiscal staff and employees.
- Information Technology department has implemented streamlined portals for easier grant online submission.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & FINANCE
Rich Garman – Director

Growth and Advocate for Policy Development

Industrial Site Development

- Redevelopment
- New Development
- Infrastructure Support

Autonomy/Automation

- Collaboration of all Autonomy
- Factory 4.0 (Automation)

Energy Policy

- Develop/pursue projects to support energy sector in ND
- Study and advocate for long term energy solutions

Animal Agriculture

- Advance opportunities for animal-based agriculture

Data Center Policy

- Define what is needed to attract high end data center business

NEXT STEPS

Strategic Session Foundation Meeting

WSI Boardroom

January 8, 2024

1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 2:00 p.m.