

## Summary of Focus Group Input – Rural Economic Development Survey

**Date:** Monday, June 15, 2020  
**Subject:** Rural Economic Development Survey Responses – Top 5 Recommendations from Focus Group Meeting Attendees  
**Focus Group Attendees:** See below

Responses from Attendees:

### **Antoinette Heiser, Hazen Chamber**

- 1) Could develop a manual that will assist and help implement
- 2) Offer more training
- 3) Increase awareness of MSI and grants available
- 4) Collaborate with other entities such as League of Cities, GNDC and Vision West
- 5) Mapping-would this help with the many organizations?

### **Daniel Stenberg, McKenzie Co. Economic Development**

1. Encourage local leadership development and volunteerism
  - NDSU Extension “Lead Local” program or “Rural Leadership Program”
  - Development of a local/regional Leadership Development course

I like the “Lead Local” and “Rural Leadership ND” recommendation. If there’s a way we could provide more sponsorships/partial scholarships I think that would be a better use of resources than developing a new local/regional leadership development course. So much of the content of our group is covered by NDSU Extension Leadership and Civic Engagement, StrengthenND and EDND—so I think finding ways for us to continue to complement each other’s work is important in maximizing impact.

### **Dawn Mandt, Red River Regional Council**

1. Continue to support community planning
  - 1.5M for economic recovery plans – June 5 request
2. Continue to build capacity of local ED organizations to aid in communicating the value of ED activities with those holding the purse strings
3. Provide support for training and professional certifications to ED staff

### **Janne Myrdal, Senator – District 10**

1. Build realistic capacity of ED orgs. to communicate with and educate on the value of ED activities.
2. Emphasize community planning with grant funding
3. Diversify ED funding and work alongside local government to identify stable sources of funding.
4. Identify and involve more local community and industry individuals with goal to form regional teams that could implement small community plans
5. Utilize regional opportunities to highlight ED

### **Megan Laudenschlager, StrengthenND**

1. Continue to support community planning with grant funding.
2. Partner with appropriate entities to build the capacity of ED organizations (organizational/admin capacity; ED-specific skills; Shawn's training manual suggestion).
3. Conduct ecosystem mapping and implement targeted networking opportunities (individual and regional ED champions; organizations at local, regional, statewide, and national levels that support ED - potentially include a directory in the training manual).
4. Invest in local leadership development (surface level through deeper systems development).
5. Identify, develop, and provide local, regional, and statewide ED value propositions for use by ED boards and staff for investment requests.

### **Teran Doerr, Bowman Co. Development Corporation**

1. Continue to build capacity of local ED organizations to aid in communicating the value of ED activities. Metrics showing the value of those communities who invested in it vs. those who didn't. Working with League of Cities/Association of Counties in getting the message to their members by engaging at their conferences/or directly to their membership.
2. I really like the ecosystem mapping. I think this could give everyone a great idea of what is out there and how we can partner and collaborate. It would also be a great communication tool.
3. Educating on the importance of planning as a tool/necessity for community growth and supporting it through funding. Encouraging uniqueness to the community while also looking at larger regional and state goals.

4. A developer manual would be something really helpful to give to not only new developers but boards as well.
5. Help determine ways to diversify and create stability in ED funding.

#### **Luke Anderson, Anderson Seed Farms**

1. Support ED Organizations and local government efforts to diversify ED Funding or identify a source of funding
2. Communicate the values of ED Activities
3. Continue to Promote Economic Development training in cooperation with partners
4. Identify needs of ED Professionals and continue economic development facing low cost access to training webinars
5. Communicating the value of ED activities

#### **Gwen Crawford, City of Lisbon/Valley City**

1. Encourage identification of economic development “teams” which focus on regional or industry specific opportunities & challenges. (Careful thoughts on when working regionally, local doesn’t get lost or left out)
2. Training Manual/Guide (Could this be regional along with statewide?)
3. Encourage local leadership development and volunteerism (Not necessarily create new since there are several already but find ways to show importance, encourage etc of importance of existing ones)
4. Continue to build capacity of local ED organizations to aid in communicating the value of ED activities
5. Sources of ED Funding and consistency/stability

Jay Doan – No Comments Received

Joyce Shining One Side – No Comments Received

Lindsey Lipp, Aldevron – No Comments Received

#### **Summary of recommendations**

1. Continue to support **community conversations** that influence local leader’s decisions, resulting in a **written plan, emphasizing community priorities** and supporting resource allocation
2. Help identify additional funding opportunities and ways to diversify and **stabilize rural development funding**.

3. Support all facets of rural development including investment in **infrastructure, quality of life services & high paying jobs** which take advantage of deurbanization trends and meet unique local needs
4. Continue to **build capacity** and leadership talent of local economic development organizations
5. Provide advocacy, with State level organizational support, to aid in **communicating the value** of rural development activities with stakeholders that invest in rural development

#### Action

1. Implement **targeted networking opportunities** (individual and regional ED champions; organizations at local, regional, statewide, and national levels that support ED) (manual and/or scholarships, transitional/succession leadership) (Commerce, NDLC, Assoc of Counties, EDND)
2. Conduct **ecosystem mapping**