2026

DASHBOARD
& PROGRAMMING

Contained within this document are the details behind the programming of the GFMEDC for 2026.

This work is in alignment with our strategic direction, as well as key goals the EDC is charged with addressing within the program of work of Innovate28.

The first few pages are a summary/dashboard of our key programming. Just click on any of the programs to navigate to more details.

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Heading into our 80th year as an organization, the GFMEDC has always had as its mission to lead efforts to support primary sector companies. We know through decades of work that our regional economy is going to grow primarily by taking care of those companies already operating here. Couple that with work in our strong entrepreneurial ecosystem and targeted recruitment efforts will continue to diversify our economy.

WORKFORCE

With more than 20 years leading the region's business-focused workforce development programming, the EDC continues its efforts to fulfill the most pressing issue and opportunity for our clients – workforce attraction. Through additional research, and demand of our primary sector clients, we are also supporting them with the implementation of a company culture program and providing the critical data for workforce development alignment and decision making.

DATA & ANALYTICS

Data driven decisions lead to results. And, in doing so it insures we are being efficient and effective with the resources provided to us.

FARGO MOORHEAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2026 GOALS

20 Company Expansions or Relocations
150 Strategic Engagements with Existing Companies
75 Company Assists
7 Certified Sites

Business Development 2026

ALLOTTED PROGRAM BUDGET $221,400
RECOMMENDED PROGRAM BUDGET *$367,400*
STAFF BUDGET $578,500

PILLARS	PROGRAMMING

PRIORITY PROGRAMMING
REDUCED FUNDING
ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING DUE TO REDUCED FUNDING

Recruitment

Business Recruitment Strategy

Industry Conferences
Program $85,000
Staff $74,500
Bioscience, Cultivate, Autonomous Nation, Prairie Capital, World Agritech, Extreme Weather, Select USA, National Bio Conference, AUVSI Xponential, MD&M West, UAS Summit, Medical Alley

Hosting Prospects
Program $10,000
Staff $52,800
Expense to host prospects in town throughout the year

Existing Industry

BRE Program
Program $7,500
Staff $188,700
Strategic visits with existing industry including projects and assists

Entrepreneurship

Ecosystem Engagement
Program $1,000
Staff $120,500
For meetings throughout the year with entrepreneurs and sponsorship of various events

SBDC & 3rd Party Support
Program $9,000
Staff $0
Support of work of organizations who directly assist primary sector startups

Innovation/Pitch Events
$5,000
Support organizations who host pitch events

Cross-Pillar Support

Growth Initiative Fund
STAFF TIME
Staff $48,600
Manage revolving loan fund that supports primary sector companies

Implan Project Impacts
Program $6,000
Staff $18,000
Conduct economic impact analysis of projects per I28 goals

Technology for all Business Dev
Program $57,900
Staff $34,600
Dropbox, Qualtrix for BRE, Lightcast, Salesforce, Industry Profiles

Document Ready Sites
Program $45,000
Staff $40,800
Sites certified and marketed

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2026 GOALS

70 Companies Using Recruitment Tools
45 Companies Engaged in Company Culture Program
0 Impressions **7500** Unique Users to Website **0** Form Submissions

Workforce Development 2026

PROGRAM BUDGET $143,200
RECOMMENDED PROGRAM BUDGET *$713,200*
STAFF BUDGET $272,000

PILLARS PROGRAMMING

PRIORITY PROGRAMMING
REDUCED FUNDING
ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING DUE TO REDUCED FUNDING

Recruitment

REGIONAL BRANDING

Branding Tools
Program $46,500
Staff $41,800
LiveInFMArea website, Update Site, Jobs Widget

Regional TV Recruitment
In-Kind $75,000
Midco in-kind investment through Innovate28

Perception Surveying
$40,000
2/Year done by a third party

DIRECT COMPANY/PROSPECT SUPPORT

Communicate/Manage Prospect Pipeline
Program $50,000
Staff $20,100
Support management of Hubspot and sequencing of creative messaging and tracking

HR Workforce Recruitment Company Events
Program $10,000
Staff $24,100
4/Year - Cost to pay for space, food, etc.

Recruitment Tools
Program $22,500
Staff $36,000
Lightning Recruitment and Layoff Monitoring & Marketing

TARGETED AUDIENCES

Creative Campaigns
$210,000
New/Refreshed Videos; Creative for Campaigns; Targets- Students, Boomerang/Alumni, Industry Sectors

Ad Placements
$250,000
Will be specific to each campaign and include social, TV, Direct, etc.

Development System

Industry Sector Workforce Profiles
STAFF TIME
Staff $31,300
Expense covered in Lightcast fees

Workforce Summit 2026
$20,000
Follow up from the Data & Analytics Workforce Summit

FM Region Workforce Survey
Program $2,700
Staff $34,900
Conduct/produce report & event annually

Bioscience Career Exploration
Need Sponsor to Support
Staff $18,100
300 college/high school students

Retention

Company Culture Program
Program $11,500
Staff $65,700
Basecamp, Legal, Marketing/Events

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Communications & Community Initiatives 2026

PROGRAM BUDGET $57,000
RECOMMENDED PROGRAM BUDGET *$100,000*
STAFF BUDGET $253,200

PROGRAMMING

PRIORITY PROGRAMMING
REDUCED FUNDING
ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING DUE TO REDUCED FUNDING

Annual Meeting
Program $25,000
Staff $29,900
Hosting the unique approach we take to showcase our work

Website Maintenance, COLI, Widgets
Program $21,500
Staff $39,200
COLI and other widget plug-in's, basic updates and hosting of our websites

Annual Report
Program $7,500
Staff $31,900
Special website developed report that is used throughout the year

General Communications
STAFF TIME
Staff $97,200
Newsletters, Blogs, Graphic Design, Press Releases, Etc.

Video Production Tools
Program $3,000
Staff $11,700
Loom, Adobe, Vimeo, etc.

Flourishing Initiative
STAFF TIME
Staff $43,300
Research, data collection, analysis and marketing

Board & Staff Development
$40,000
Costs accounted for in general and administrative portion of the budget

Freelance Writing Support
$6,000
Four key business development and workforce stories

Support Folkways Community work
$5,000
To get access to photos/videos and to support their overall work in the community

Hubspot & Consulting Support
$24,000
To manage and utilize inbound marketing

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

General Office & Staff Expenses 2026

OFFICE OPERATIONS $390,000
STAFF BUDGET $325,500

YOUR EDC TEAM

Business Development

John Machacek | Chief Innovation Officer
Manages GIF program, entrepreneurial ecosystem and support of young primary sector entrepreneurs, flourishing work

Ryan Aasheim | Chief Business Development Officer
Leads all of business development, but with focus on project management and recruitment; also document ready sites

Joey Ness | VP Business Development
Manages BRE program; some project management; some community support (MetroCOG)

VP Business Development
Staff to support BRE work, projects and recruitment

Workforce/Community Development

Tifanie Gelinske | Sr. VP Workforce Development
Manages our workforce programming, including Culture Program, workforce needs of companies, connections to workforce partners, and workforce recruitment programming

Data & Analytics

Sammi Rowe | Sr. VP Business Intelligence
Manages all our software services - CRM, Lightcast, Qualtrics, EImpact, Gazelle, work with Fed, etc. and provides these services across our core areas of work

Communications

Lisa Gulland-Nelson | Chief Communication Officer
Supports orgs communications internally and with partners - web sites, blogs, social, annual meeting, media, etc.; as well as workforce recruitment marketing; hubspot, etc.

General Operations Staff

Joe Raso | President & CEO
Oversees strategy and vision of the organization working with the Board, partners and the staff; supports projects, workforce, comms, public relations, data, Flourishing initiative, etc.

Lexi Nord | Accounting Manager & Operations Support
Office Management, Finances, HR and general event support

Chelsie Wertman | Executive Assistant & Program Support Manager
Executive Assistant, manages meetings including minutes, graphic design support for Business Development and Workforce, event support, project packaging, Governance, Exec and Board support, etc.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FRAMING THE OPPORTUNITY

The Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation (GFMEDC) plays a central role in shaping a vibrant, resilient regional economy. Through strategic business development efforts, we support existing primary sector companies, attract new industry investment and relocation, and foster entrepreneurship that drives long-term prosperity.

Our work begins with relationships – building trust and providing timely, practical assistance that helps companies make confident decisions about growth and investment in our region. Whether it's helping an established business navigate expansion, developing document-ready sites for faster speed-to-market decisions, or nurturing the next generation of startups, the GFMEDC connects people, ideas, resources, and opportunities to strengthen the region's economic foundation.

In 2024 the Fargo-Moorhead MSA generated $21.2 Billion of Gross Regional Product (GRP), a measure of overall economic output. This is a 69.6% increase over the 12.5 Billion GRP generated 10 years prior in 2014. During this same time period, international exports from the MSA, driven exclusively by primary sector companies, increased by 19.7% from $735 million in 2013 to $880.1 million in 2023 *(International Trade Administration).*

As a region, we understand that economic growth doesn't happen by chance – it's the result of deliberate collaboration and strategic preparation. Each connection made, site developed, and business supported contributes to a thriving economic ecosystem that benefits all who live and work in the Fargo-Moorhead area.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE GFMEDC'S WORK IN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The GFMEDC's business development efforts center on one goal: growing a strong, diverse regional economy by helping primary-sector companies start, expand, and succeed in the greater Fargo-Moorhead area. That work includes existing company support, new industry recruitment, site development, targed industry sector development, industry analysis, and entrepreneurship—all built on collaboration and data-driven strategy.

Through our "Minding Our Own Business(es)" existing industry program, we meet directly with local companies for strategic conversations to identify opportunities, challenges, and industry trends shaping the region's economy. This engagement produces actionable insights that guide resources, inform partners, and lead to real results. Through November of this year, the GFMEDC completed **144 strategic company engagements** and **provided direct assistance to over 87 companies**, including connecting businesses to financing, workforce pipelines, and visibility that help fuel their growth.

At the same time, the GFMEDC continues to recruit new primary-sector employers – focusing on emerging technology industries such as AgTech, bioscience, advanced manufacturing, and autonomous systems. These efforts, supported by partnerships with state and regional allies, ensure the region remains visible and competitive for future investment.

Recognizing the importance to global site selectors of speed-to-market site information, the GFMEDC also supports a Document Ready Site (certified site) program to identify and certify shovel-ready locations across Cass and Clay Counties. Five sites are already certified, with several others in the process of becoming certified, giving site selectors and companies confidence that the region is ready for business.

This same spirit of readiness drives the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem, where collaboration among partners like Emerging Prairie, Grand Farm, gener8tor, ND Growth Fund, SBDC, and many more help founders access resources, mentors, and capital. It's a network that celebrates innovation and reinforces Fargo-Moorhead's reputation as a place where new ideas grow into thriving companies.

The GFMEDC's business development work reflects a simple but powerful truth: growth comes from connection. Every assist, every introduction, and every project builds momentum, which creates an economy where companies choose to start, stay, and succeed.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

EXISTING INDUSTRY

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM OVERVIEW

75% of the GFMEDC's activity comes through supporting the needs of existing industry. One of the key mechanisms for outreach, relationship development, and business development support is through our Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) program known as 'Minding Our Own Business(es).'

This is a free program for primary-sector companies to share knowledge, foster connections, and support business growth – while collecting strategic data that can describe trends in the marketplace across areas such as expansion activity, workforce satisfaction, community barriers and opportunities, and feedback on the region's infrastructure and utilities, K-12 and higher education, business and tax climate, and business support entities.

The GFMEDC's goal is 150 strategic engagements annually with existing companies to support their growth. This is achieved through three primary vehicles of Minding Our Own Business(es): startup surveys with young entrepreneurial companies, workforce surveys that are deployed in partnership with the Fargo Moorhead Human Resource Association (FMHRA), and one-on-ones with established existing company executives.

DETAILS

Through Minding Our Own Business(es), our team meets one-on-one with key decision makers of a company or gathers feedback through the use of online surveys. BRE surveys are a common tool used by economic developers across the country to collect vital information from businesses including opportunities for expansion, challenges or barriers to growth, and input on community resources and amenities. The GFMEDC uses these visits and survey responses to prioritize how we can support businesses directly in the short-term, while collecting long-term aggregate data that provides useful insight into the economic trends our region is experiencing.

The Minding Our Own Business(es) program continues to evolve to meet the demands of primary-sector businesses throughout the region. Most notably in 2025, our team developed and implemented a new **benchmarking system**, which shares customized reports comparing a company's responses to the aggregated datasets of their industry peers and all primary-sector companies over the past year in areas such as plans for business expansion, workforce satisfaction, and barriers to growth. These reports also offer insights that have been synthesized by generative AI for topics including positions that are most difficult to recruit for and programs and benefits companies have introduced to attract or retain workforce. With the introduction of Innovate28, the GFMEDC's BRE program is also leveraging its outreach and strategic data collection to bolster the FMWF Chamber's public policy initiatives through vetting key legislative or public policy insights that are of great importance to the primary-sector companies. This will enable greater market intelligence on the needs of primary-sector businesses and equip the Chamber with compelling data and potential targets for legislative testimony that can positively influence public policy outcomes for our region.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
EXISTING INDUSTRY

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION PROGRAM

2025 ALLOCATION

$7,500 from GFMEDC annual Business Development programmatic budget

2025 GOAL: 150

RESULTS

Strategic Engagements 2023-2025

2023	162
2024	154
2025	144 *(through 11/30/2025)*

PARTNERS

Bank of North Dakota
Impact Dakota
ND Job Service
ND Department of Commerce
Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)
Local city economic developers in Fargo, Moorhead, West Fargo, and Casselton
Minn-Dak Manufacturers Association
Small Business Administration
FMWF Chamber

The EDC's Business Retention & Expansion program is one of the easiest ways for businesses to stay plugged-in to the information, resources, and programs that help businesses like SpaceAge Synthetics. We are grateful for the partnership of the EDC in collaborating on multiple successful projects, saving our organization significant costs through incentives and financing programs. Often this starts with a simple survey or 30-minute annual meeting with the EDC team.

– JOHN HERTSGAARD, PRESIDENT & CEO, SPACEAGE SYNTHETICS

ASSISTS

The Greater Fargo Moorhead EDC's support for businesses extends beyond workforce needs and major expansion projects. Our team provides ongoing assistance to primary-sector companies in many forms — from connecting them with resources and partners to highlighting their success stories. This smaller, consistent support, often lays the groundwork for future growth, expansions, and job creation. Common areas of assistance include certification support, media and promotion, funding and resource guidance, business connections and referrals, and event and program awareness.

2023	2024	2025
85	75	87 *(through 11/30/25)*

As a small manufacturing company dealing with some of the same challenges as larger manufacturers, it's helpful to get the same access to resources and connections in the area.

ALLISON KLEIN, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, INTERNATIONAL MARKETING SYSTEMS

PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $7,500

We intend to maintain the existing program as currently structured, with no changes to cost, scope, or activities. If additional funding were available, we would add an additional business development staff.

GOAL: 150 STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENTS | 75 COMPANY ASSISTS

FULLY FUNDED GOAL: 175 STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENTS | 100 COMPANY ASSISTS

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
RECRUITMENT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INDUSTRY RECRUITMENT OVERVIEW

The GFMEDC, in 2022, completed a strategic planning process that committed to a proactive approach to attracting and securing opportunities in 3 key targeted industries (AgTech, Bioscience/Medical Device, and Autonomous Systems/UAS) that align with the region's economic goals, competitive advantages, and workforce capabilities. This strategy is designed to foster long-term economic growth, diversify the local economy, and create high-quality job opportunities.

Key elements of the Industry Recruitment strategy include:

ASSET MAPPING & VALUE PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

Highlighting regional strengths including infrastructure, workforce talent, educational institutions, quality of life, cost advantages, and logistical access. Custom value propositions are developed for each target industry to showcase how the region meets their specific operational needs. This strategy can be evidenced by the GFMEDC targeted industry profiles that have been created and updated annually:

- **AgTech**
- **Bioscience**
- **Autonomous Systems / UAS**
- **Advanced Manufacturing**
- **Extreme Weather Technologies (in development)**

LEAD GENERATION & OUTREACH

Leveraging the aforementioned targeted industry sector profiles to engaging in strategic marketing, trade shows, investment missions, and site consultant engagement to generate leads. The strategy includes both domestic and international outreach to attract anchor employers and high-potential startups. This strategy includes supporting both local targeted industry events hosted and organized by local partners and attending nationally organized targeted industry events.

- Cultivate Conference - Fargo, Hosted by Grand Farm
- Autonomous Nation Conference- Fargo, Hosted by Grand Farm
- Prairie Capital Summit - Fargo, Hosted by Emerging Prairie & 50 South Capital
- Bioscience Summit - Fargo, Hosted by GFMEDC
- Select USA Conference – Washington D.C.
- World AgriTech Innovation Converence – San Francisco, CA
- Xponential Conference (UAS & Autonomous Systems) - San Diego, CA
- Site Selector Guild Conference – Nashville (2024) and San Antonio (2023)
- UAS Summit & Expo – Grand Forks

PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION

Partnering with local governments, utilities, educational institutions, and private sector stakeholders to align incentives, streamline permitting processes, and ensure site readiness. A few examples would be:

- Document Ready Site Program
- Select USA Conference – Washington D.C.
  - Attended with ND Department of Commerce and ND Trade Office
- Annual Site Selector Guild Conferences
- 2024 Site Selector FAM Tour to FM area in conjunction with 1st Gov. Cup

INCENTIVE STRATEGY

Developing competitive and performance-based incentive packages that support business attraction while ensuring responsible return on investment for the community.

Support and Advocate for incentives that include:

- Automate ND
- Operation Intern
- APUC
- LIFT
- Bioscience Innovation Grant
- Sales Tax Exemption on Biologic Inputs
- North Dakota Development Fund
- Property Tax Exemptions / PILOTs
- GFMEDC's Growth Initiative Fund

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Implementing KPIs to track progress, such as number of new jobs created, capital investment secured, and business relocations or expansions completed.

Businesses Attracted:

- ND Soybean Processors
- Boson Motors
- Cota Systems
- Corvent Medical
- Trilogy Networks
- Vetnexus
- Checkable Medical
- Verdethos
- Aigen
- FamGenix
- MyAgData
- Immersive Reality USA
- Long Creek Steel
- Applied Digital

Over the past three years 29% of EDC supported projects have been recruited companies.

PARTNERS

Grand Farm	gener8tor	Cass County Electric Coop	BioND
Dakota Business Lending	50 South Capital	OtterTail Power Co.	NDSU
ND Dept. of Commerce	Xcel Energy	MIDCO	Concordia
Cities & Counties in the Metro	NDSCS	MSUM	M-State

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
RECRUITMENT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HOSTING PROSPECTS

Attracting new businesses to a region is one of the most impactful ways to strengthen a local economy, create jobs, and expand the tax base. Hosting prospect companies, those considering relocation or expansion, is a critical step in the business recruitment process. It allows us to showcase the unique advantages of our region while building the trust and relationships necessary to secure long-term investment.

PLAN FOR 2026 **BUDGET $10,000**

With the expectation of greater economic activity in 2026, we project the utilization of the proposed budget.

INDUSTRY CONFERENCES

Industry-focused conferences are not just networking events, they are strategic investments in visibility, credibility, and relationship-building. By actively engaging with industry leaders and decision-makers, we can effectively showcase the strengths of our region, generate qualified business leads, and lay the groundwork for future relocations.

2025 ALLOCATION: $121,116

$4,937 | World Agri-Tech Summit (March 2025) - San Francisco, CA

- $3,945 of this covered by FARMS NSF Engines subaward with the remainder coming out of GFMEDC Business Development Budget
- Two dozen meaningful engagements several which have led to ongoing business development projects and prospects

$3,174 - Select USA Investment Conference (May 2025) - Washington, DC

- GFMEDC budget covered $1,824 travel costs and ND Commerce covered event registration fee of $1,350
- Dozen meaningful engagements still following up with several
- Important to be promoting and telling the story of the region as many conversations revealed that businesses, site selectors, and prospects have little to no awareness about market and growth opportunities in the FM area (and more broadly North Dakota/Minnesota)
- Other states are branding and telling their story in a big way and have the attention and interest of site selectors and FDI (foreign direct investors) around the globe

2025 ALLOCATION: $121,116 CONTINUED

$24,500 - Cultivate Conference (June 2025) - Fargo, ND

- Total cost funded by FARMS NSF Engines subaward
- Hosted by Grand Farm during AgTech Week, a critical platform for convening and gathering agtech business development prospects ranging from early stage tech startups to mature corporate brands. The global brand of Grand Farm is bringing more attention to the region and meeting with a growing list of prospects here in our market can be done in a much more impactful and intentional manner than attending national or global industry conferences where competition is much more fierce.
- Since 2024, Grand Farm events including Cultivate and Autonomous Nation and other individual engagements, have led to **39 business project prospects** and resulted in **4 projects/relocations** during this same time period.

$1,505 - EDC hosted Collaborate to Innovate (University, Industry Partnerships) event during AgTech Week

- ND Commerce co-hosted and contributed $500
- Hosted 75 attendees

$5,000 – Autonomous Nation Conference (September 2025)

- Funded from GFMEDC BD programming budget
- Strategic partnerships to help grow our Autonomous Systems, UAS, and AgTech sectors

$71,000 – Bioscience Summit (October 15-16, 2025)

- $55,000 Funded from sponsorships and registration fees
- $16,000 funded from GFMEDC BD Budget
- Planned and hosted by GFMEDC
- Has led to or supported 7 company projects in development
- Brings bioscience and biotech companies both nationally and internationally to our region to network and collaborate. Helps to grow and strengthen our bioscience ecosystem.

PLAN FOR 2026

ALLOCATED BUDGET $85,000

RECOMMENDED BUDGET $151,000

We intend to continue attending and supporting many of the industry conferences listed above in 2026 and, with adequate funding and staffing, would plan to added several new targeted sector events at a cost listed below. If additional funding were available, we would attend the additional conferences shown in green below and increase our support of those we plan to attend in 2026.

BIOSCIENCE SUMMIT (FARGO)	$65,000
CULTIVATE CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP (FARGO)	$10,000
AUTONOMOUS NATION SPONSORSHIP (FARGO)	$5,000
PRAIRIE CAPITAL SUMMIT SPONSORSHIP (FARGO)	$2,500
WORLD AGRITECH INNOVATION SUMMIT (SAN FRANCISCO)	$2,500
AURORA COLD WEATHER TECH SUMMIT (FARGO)	$5,000
NATIONAL BIO CONFERENCE (SAN DIEGO)	$5,000
AUVSI XPONENTIAL (DETROIT)	$5,000
MD&M WEST (MEDICAL DEVICE & ADVANCED MANUFACTURING)	$5,000
UAS SUMMIT & EXPO SPONSORSHIP (GRAND FORKS)	$5,000
MEDICAL ALLEY 2026 SUMMIT SPONSORSHIP (MINNEAPOLIS)	$5,000

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECOSYSTEM ENGAGEMENT

On a micro level, we engage with and work directly with the entrepreneurs and startups to listen, learn and assist them in their growth. On a macro level, we act as an entrepreneurial ecosystem builder to help foster the regional ecosystem's strength and connectivity, as well as increase the visibility of entrepreneurship and resources, such as through the aggregation of helpful resources on our website, our curation of the Techstars Startup Digest Fargo newsletters, and interviewing entrepreneurs each month for Fargo INC! Magazine.

When GFMEDC added Entrepreneurial Development as a strategic business development pillar in 2012, this approach was more forward-thinking than most EDCs around the country. The rest of the nation is now catching up on that economic development strategy, with even the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) adding an Entrepreneurial Development Professional certification in 2021 and stating that as "IEDC looks to the future of economic development, entrepreneurship is a central theme."

GFMEDC provided the seed financial and social capital for Emerging Prairie's early years, and has carried on a strong and collaborative business development partnership with them (and now Grand Farm as well) into today.

BUDGET $1,000

PLAN FOR 2026

RECOMMENDED BUDGET $7,500

We intend to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured. We are basing the lowered budget amount on the funding available to us in 2026.

HELPFUL LINKS

[GFMEDC Entrepreneurs page]
[StartupDigest Fargo]
[Fargo INC interviews]

I just want to say thank you for all the great introductions you made for me last year. Every single one has been worthwhile and fruitful...Just wanted to say thanks again, your support has made a real difference.

JESSIE ROCK, FARGO-MOORHEAD SCIENCE MUSEUM

PARTNERS

Emerging Prairie
gener8tor
50 South Capital
ND Department of Commerce
ND Small Business Development Centers
ILT Academy
Fargo INC!
Techstars
Fastlane 94
Neurogether Ventures
MSUM
Concordia CEL
NDSU

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SBDC & 3RD PARTY SUPPORT

The funding mechanisms of various entrepreneurial and small business technical assistance providers rely on collaborative financial support from organizations such as government, economic development, banks & more. The hands-on assistance by these organizations play an important part of the ecosystem to better move entrepreneurs forward. A couple of examples would include the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) who are often one of the first referrals we make for things like business planning, financial forecasting & market research; and the ILT Academy which provides an immersive series of virtual classes where participants learn to leverage tools, innovation techniques, and practice key concepts in the Lean Startup methodology.

2025 ALLOCATIONS

Ecosystem Management $8,500

- Grand Farm Sponsorship $2,500
- ChippCon Sponsorship $1,000

Pitch Events $7,500

- Pitch Event Sponsorships $2,000

SBDC & 3rd Party Support $20,000

- ND SBDC Support $2,500
- ILT Academy Support $7,500

BUDGET $9,000

RECOMMENDED BUDGET $12,500

PLAN FOR 2026

We intend to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured. We are basing the lowered budget amount on the funding available to us in 2026.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

CROSS-PILLAR SUPPORT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GROWTH INITIATIVE FUND

The Growth Initiative Fund (GIF) is a $9+ million revolving loan fund formed in 1993 by GFMEDC as a separate non-profit and is administered by GFMEDC staff. The fund was primarily capitalized through contributions by Cass County, City of Fargo and City of West Fargo. A core function is to primarily act as a community buy-down partner with the Bank of North Dakota (BND) on the PACE and Flex PACE loan program, promoting economic development in Cass County and enabling primary sector companies access to low-interest financing.

RESULTS

As of October 2025, the GIF has lent out nearly **$21 million in 300+ loans** to primary sector companies, enabling them to receive **over $36 million** in state grants to reduce their cost of financing company expansions. The GIF's loans were part of over **$700 million in capital expenditures** by the companies that also created almost **7,000 jobs** and added **6.2 million square feet** of real estate within Cass County.

BUSINESS LOANS	LOAN AMOUNT	BANK OF ND MATCH	JOBS CREATED	SQ. FT. ADDED	CAPITAL INVESTED
305	$20,602,207	$36,555,000	6,875	6,225,000	$705,000,000

PARTNERS

Bank of North Dakota	Fargo	Cass County
Local Financial Institutions	West Fargo	

PLAN FOR 2026

STAFF TIME

Aside from staff time, there are not direct expense costs to GFMEDC as the GIF's minimal expenditures come out of the fund's operations.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

CROSS-PILLAR SUPPORT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DOCUMENT READY SITES OVERVIEW

Document Ready Site (DRS) programs, sometimes referred to as certified or shovel ready programs, entered the economic development world over 35 years ago in response to the ever-growing demands of companies and their site selectors for immediately available, highly-detailed, and comprehensive site information for their facility location projects. Document Ready Site Programs can provide site selectors and consultants with the speed, transparency, and assurance they need to quickly determine if a site has the characteristics or infrastructure needed to proceed in a timely manner. Now established in over 35 states, these programs have become an essential element of a region's economic tool kit. GFMEDC has spent several years building a regional DRS program to attract investment and accelerate business development by reducing risk and saving time for companies looking to locate or expand.

GFMEDC began developing the program in early 2019 by convening a group of regional stakeholders (utilities, municipal partners, engineering firms, and others). Using the Xcel Energy Certified Site program as a model, the program moved forward and engaged site selection consultant, Phil Schneider, to help build a program, covering both Cass and Clay Counties. GFMEDC serves as the lead coordinating agency and works closely with Phil Schneider who is now with leading site selection agency, Global Location Strategies (GLS), to oversee project management and certification of each site. This initiative focuses on recruiting businesses to our region as well as giving existing companies expansion options. These sites have much of the planning, zoning, surveys, title work, environmental studies, etc. already completed. Our long-term strategy includes a revolving portfolio of 10-12 large sites that are replenished as sites are acquired for project development.

2024-2025 ALLOCATIONS

2024

$40,000 from GFMEDC Business Development budget

2025

$42,500 from GFMEDC Business Development budget

PARTNERS

Ottertail Power Company
Xcel Energy
Cass County Electric Coop
Goldmark Commercial Real Estate, Eagle Ridge Development
CBRE
MDU
City of Moorhead
City of Fargo
City of Kindred
Global Location Strategies (GLS)
BNSF
Midco

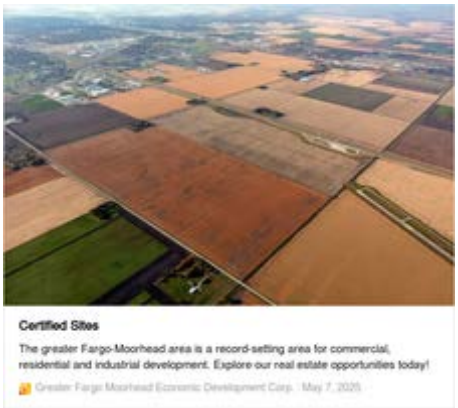
RESULTS

- 5 Document Ready Sites across metro portfolio
  - 4 Fargo sites, 1 Moorhead Site
- 1,110 acres
- Sites integrated into LOIS System and LASSO System
- Digital Marketing Campaign - promoting region & sites to over 100 site selectors
- Attend Site Selector Guild and Select USA Conference to market sites
- Responded to 18 RFP's since beginning of 2023

LEARN MORE

FARGO INC ARTICLE - PG. 66

VIEW OUR SITES



PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $45,000

RECOMMENDED BUDGET $60,000

We intend to maintain the annual operating cost through consulting services with GLS in 2026. If additional funding were available, the resources would allow GFMEDC to increase marketing efforts and engage in a new site identification process which utilizes consultant services to analyze sites across the marketplace to identity those sites that have a higher combination of attractive features (site size, proximity to infrastructure, interstate, rail, etc.)

GOAL: 7 CERTIFIED SITES

FULLY FUNDED GOAL: 8 CERTIFIED SITES | 1 SOLD

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

CROSS-PILLAR SUPPORT

FARGO MOORHEAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TECHNOLOGY FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The GFMEDC's focus on data and analytics isn't a new venture. It's one that has been cultivated through numerous intentional partnerships, the mastery of nationally-recognized data tools that assists with programming like Lightning Recruitment, our HR survey in collaboration with FMHRA, the Data & Analytics Summit and so much more.

A focus on good data gives us the ability to make and recommend good decisions with sound and logical reasoning that will be advantageous for regional primary sector companies.

FRAMING THE CHALLENGE

As the economic and workforce landscape becomes more complicated and nuanced, the need for data for reliable decision making becomes paramount. Good data ensures we are thoughtful and respectful stewards of investment dollars, making decisions that have the ability to positively shape programming and our regional economy. Having multiple data tools allows us to triangulate various pieces of information to strengthen our understanding of our regions story.

INDUSTRY PROFILES

To illustrate a further commitment to data to drive decision-making, the GFMEDC produced in partnership with Lightcast, four industry profile summaries. Learn more in the FM Data & Analytics Summit Recap.

FM DATA & ANALYTICS

With the creation of the FM Data & Analytics Team, the GFMEDC is committed to gathering and analyzing data that continues to tell the story of the FM economy. With our partners from Lightcast, we hosted the first FM Data & Analytics Summit focused on projected workforce challenges in targeted industries.

TOOLS UTILIZED

- Lightcast Developer Subscription $18,000
- EImpact widgets subscription $10,000
- SeekOut Subscription $4,500
- Qualtrics $10,500

2025 ALLOCATION

- Lightcast fully funded through NSF Engines FARMS
- Seekout funded by GFMEDC Workforce Budget
- Qualtrics funded by GFMEDC Workforce Budget
- Funding prior to 2025 was via GFMEDC Workforce Budget

DATA & ANALYTICS SUMMIT RECAP

DATA PARTNERS

IMPLAN, eIMPACT, HR ASSOCIATION, GAZELLE.AI, CHMURA, METROCOG, seekout, Lightcast, C2ER THE COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH

PLAN FOR 2026

We intend to continue utilizing the same data tools as currently structured, with no changes to scope or activities.

BUDGET $57,900

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

CROSS-PILLAR SUPPORT

FARGO MOORHEAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

IMPLAN PROJECT IMPACTS

Using economic impact modeling software and a third party economist, we better understand the direct, indirect and induced ripple effects of primary-sector growth (on-going operations impacts + construction impacts) on our region.

From 2019-2024, the GFMEDC successfully supported 145 projects which created 2,620 direct jobs, utilized 4.44M square feet of space and injected over $1.1B in capital investment into the region.

Because of the GFMEDC's successful projects and their direct and ripple effects, the industries to the right will see the following increase in their sales once expansion projects are at full employment capacity and construction activities are concluded. While varying somewhat by economic sector, recurring impacts year after year represent about 74% of the sales values shown below.

Each year, there are positive residual impacts of each project that carries forward year over year due to continued operations and expanded projects.

CUMULATIVE TOTAL IMPACTS FOR 2019-2024 **$6.9 BILLION**

Scan to learn more about the EDC's economic impact analysis.

Accommodations	$1,389,000
Administrative & Support Services	$129,410,000
Air Transportation	$5,110,000
Ambulatory Health Care	$69,850,000
Amusement/Gambling/Recreation	$11,790,000
Broadcasting	$21,820,000
Building Materials & Garden Dealers	$21,610,000
Clothing & Accessories Stores	$10,570,000
Construction	$565,480,000
Credit Intermediation & Related	$18,600,000
Data Processing, Hosting & Related Services	$20,730,000
Educational Services	$23,527,000
Electronics & Appliances Stores	$11,622,000
Food & Beverage Stores	$24,020,000
Food Services & Drinking Places	$61,480,000
Funds/Trusts/Other Financial	$67,445,000
Furniture & Home Furnishings	$59,238,000
Gasoline Stations	$10,162,000
General Merch Stores	$18,370,000
Government	$11,428,000
Health & Personal Care Stores	$8,023,000
Hospitals	$74,160,000
Insurance Carriers & Related	$94,570,000
Lessor Nonfinance Intangible	$10,900,000
Misc. Store Retailers	$9,990,000
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	$26,410,000
Museums/Historical Sites & Similar	$1,883,000
Non-store Retailers	$25,520,000
Nursing & Residential Care	$30,300,000
Other Information Services	$10,952,000
Performing Arts & Spectator Sports	$43,477,000
Personal & Laundry Services	$33,315,000
Professional/Scientific/Tech Services	$254,420,000
Publishing Industries	$404,330,000
Rail Transportation	$26,580,000
Real Estate	$282,190,000
Religious/Grantmaking/Civic/Professional	$32,830,000
Rental & Leasing Services	$73,520,000
Repair & Maintenance	$42,590,000
Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation	$15,210,000
Securities, Commodity Contracts & Other Financial	$29,280,000
Social Assistance	$15,480,000
Sports/Hobby/Book/Music	$5,280,000
Telecommunications	$30,720,000
Transit & Ground Passenger Transportation	$10,490,000
Truck Transportation	$71,980,000
Utilities	$76,360,000
Waste Management & Remediation Services	$3,848,000
Water Transportation	$3,690,000
Wholesale Trade	$423,000,000

PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $6,000

We intend to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured, with no changes to cost, scope, or activities. This process will also provide necessary data for Innovate28.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ENTREPRENEURSHIP - ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING

INNOVATION PITCH EVENTS

Supporting startup pitch events is a common regional entrepreneurial ecosystem tactic to spotlight emerging startups, attract investor attention, and foster a culture of innovation. These events also build community connections, inspire aspiring entrepreneurs, and help validate ideas through real-time feedback and exposure.

PLAN FOR 2026 **BUDGET $5,000**

We intended to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured but due to budget restrictions we are removing this program for the time being.

WORKFORCE

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FRAMING THE OPPORTUNITY

With thousands of open jobs in the Fargo Moorhead region and one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation, attracting talent often tops the list of challenges for regional companies. Simply put, the region doesn't have enough people to fill the available jobs. The lack of talent also becomes a barrier to growth for companies. For example, if a company doesn't have enough people to get the current workload done, the company can't take on additional work.

It's a challenge our region has faced for years. In 2022 Ted Abernathy, Economic Leadership said, *"Fargo's population growth, labor force growth and stickiness give the region a competitive advantage that many regions would envy."* However, Abernathy laid out the region's challenges and opportunities, including:

- There are not enough workers for the jobs available, and workers' skills don't match employers' needs.
- Every region of the country will be competing for a shrinking labor pool.
- The local cost of living is rising and is now above the national average, so can no longer be considered a competitive criterion to market.

And the challenge is expected to get worse in the next decade. According to Lightcast, a leading labor market analytics firm, we are facing an upcoming acceleration of retirements with fewer workers expected to enter the labor market. That, along with other factors, highlights a critical need that will continue to grow.

"It's actually a global trend where there are fewer and fewer people to do critical work across industries like manufacturing, construction, skilled trades and healthcare. Our research shows the U.S. is going to see an estimated shortage of 6.2 million workers by 2032," said Josh Wright, Head of Growth, Lightcast.

FM Region companies also see workforce recruitment as a challenge, in our 2024 workforce survey 111 companies responded (51 primary-sector companies), and of those, 57% reported recruiting in the Midwest and 44% reported recruiting nationally. The data follows a similar trend in 2025 with 173 companies responding (43 primary-sector companies) and of those, 60% reported recruiting in the Midwest and 33% reported recruiting nationally. Additionally, 60% of survey respondents indicated workforce recruitment as a top 5 focus in the next 12-18 months.

In the near-term (between now and the next two years), the GFMEDC will continue to support efforts that directly impact primary-sector companies as they compete for talent.

Results from our Data and Analytics Workforce Summit with Lightcast confirm our strategies and guide our efforts. From early experiential exposure to talent retention and attraction, we are entering a critical time to support a thriving regional economy buoyed by a robust and talented workforce.

Near-term strategies center around the following themes:

TALENT ATTRACTION: IT'S A NUMBERS GAME

Population growth via targeted attraction from across the U.S.A., student attraction to our higher education institutions, and immigration are critical. Providing "soft landing" supports is essential to fill gaps.

The GFMEDC's focus is squarely on Talent Attraction and in support of efforts to retain and build the pipeline for early, experiential exposure. We believe a proactive approach to talent attraction is most effective and will keep us from losing ground as a region as we compete for talent on a national level.

COMPANIES RETAINING TALENT

Workforce stability depends on internal culture, leadership development, upskilling, and visible career ladders. Our recent workforce survey results rank these as the most critical focus areas of HR leaders.

EARLY, EXPERIENTIAL EXPOSURE IS CRITICAL

Students and job-seekers across all levels need multiple real-world touchpoints – internships, apprenticeships, mentorships, project-based learning – to connect education with careers.

WORKFORCE
RECRUITMENT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TELLING OUR STORY – ATTRACTING TALENT

Starting in 2023, thanks to a series of grants from the State of North Dakota, the GFMEDC launched a series of targeted talent attraction marketing campaigns. Investing more than one million dollars in that time, the organization has been showcasing the unique opportunities and quality of life in the Fargo-Moorhead region to individuals living in regions across the country where there is a positive wage-adjusted cost of living.

The data confirms that our campaigns are making meaningful progress toward our long-term goal: strengthening our brand story to support direct recruitment and help regional companies attract talent. By telling a more accurate and compelling story about what it's like to live and work here, we've laid a strong foundation in collaboration with our partners—including vendors and employers. Now, we're well-positioned to build on that momentum with targeted messaging designed to attract the talent our region needs.
With the state grant funds depleted, the GFMEDC will need to utilize other sources of revenue to support these efforts.

Our work has created a solid foundation. The campaigns have attracted attention; we've grabbed emails from potential new residents across the country, and we have materials to market the region.

The campaign's goals center on changing perceptions and attracting talent to the region. Through compelling storytelling, strategic digital marketing, and personalized engagement, the campaigns effectively showcase the area's strong job market, vibrant communities, and exceptional amenities. In addition to reshaping perceptions, the effort also aims to support regional employers by making it easier to attract and retain talent. By educating potential candidates about all the region has to offer, these campaigns enhance and complement the recruitment efforts of local companies.

DELIVERING RESULTS: MILLIONS REACHED, THOUSANDS ENGAGED

Since 2023, the campaigns have garnered **28 million impressions** (exposures to ads), more than **204,000 users** to the Live in FM Area website, and a **database of 20K individuals** who are interested in learning more about the region. The campaigns support brand building as the organization tells our region's story and works alongside regional companies to recruit talent to the region.

The results demonstrate that the campaigns have cut through the noise, connecting with the right audience. Fargo Moorhead's appeal resonates with people in targeted markets, especially when showcasing the strong job opportunities and quality of life available in the region.

While our original campaign focused on two targeted sectors—healthcare and manufacturing—our approach evolved in 2025. Building on that foundation, the Small Town and Fargo, for Good campaigns expanded our outreach. The Small Town campaign highlighted the appeal of both Fargo and its surrounding communities, emphasizing the benefits of small-town living. The Fargo, for Good campaign focused on what has changed and evolved in our region, inviting former residents and newcomers alike to move back and make Fargo-Moorhead home.

WORKFORCE
RECRUITMENT - REGIONAL BRANDING

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BRANDING TOOLS

To strengthen and promote our region's brand identity, we created the **Live in Fargo** website (also known as Live in FM Area) several years ago. The site serves as a cornerstone of our regional branding efforts, showcasing what makes the Fargo-Moorhead area an exceptional place to live and work. Complementing the website are two core brand videos—the **Young Professional video** and the **Family video**—which, together, are foundational to our marketing. These anchor pieces are widely used by recruiters to highlight the many advantages of living in our region.

LIVEINFARGO WEBSITE

The Live in Fargo website has become a go-to resource for recruiters and regional partners working to promote and educate others about the Fargo-Moorhead community. It's even one of the sites the State of North Dakota links to through its Find the Good Life campaign.

Designed to showcase life in the region—from healthcare and housing to recreation and education—the site also features a robust, integrated jobs board. Developed by our team with support from marketing professionals, recruiters and other partners, the site highlights the region's exceptional quality of life and answers the key questions people have when considering a move to the area.

RESULTS: 204,000 Unique users to the site
January through September 2025

LIVE IN FARGO.
NORTH OF NORMAL.

COMPANIES USING BRAND TOOLS (AS OF OCTOBER 2025)

Aerotek
Aldevron
American Crystal Sugar
Appareo
Be More Colorful
Blue Cross Blue Shield
Bobcat
Border States
Burian & Associates
Butler
CAPLP
Cardinal IG
Cass County Electric
ComDel
Dakota Fence Company
Dakota Supply Group
Elinor Coatings
Fargo Glass & Paint
Fargo Jet Center
FM CVB
FMWF Chamber
Gate City
Happy Harry's
Job Service
Korber
Marvin
McNeilus Steel
MWC Advertising
NDSU
Packet Digital
PRx
Preference Personnel
Precision Equipment
RDO
Red River Commodities
Sanford
TrueNorth Steel
West Fargo Public Schools
Western State Bank
Xcel Energy

We love the website and videos that help sell the Fargo/Moorhead community. We ask candidates what is important to them and what they like to do and use this website as a tool to help sell them on our incredible town and community!

– MEGAN SNEDDON, SANFORD HEALTH

WORKFORCE
RECRUITMENT - REGIONAL BRANDING

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

BRANDING THROUGH VIDEO

In support of our overall branding, we have produced two videos. The first is a young professional video called “You Just Have to Look”. The second video focuses on family life in the FM Metro.

PLAN FOR 2026 **BUDGET $46,500**

In 2026, we will continue strengthening our branding tools with minor updates to our website based on marketing priorities and feedback from employers and users. If additional funding comes available, we will increase our creative content, such as a winter scene video and the addition of AI into the website.

REGIONAL TV RECRUITMENT

Through an Innovate28 investment, we have partnered with Midco to promote our region through ads that run in targeted metros in both Minnesota and South Dakota. The ads showcase a promotional video focused on talent attraction in Minnesota and South Dakota. The video highlights our quality of life, competitive cost of living and great jobs. The video drives viewers to our LiveinFMArea website.

PLAN FOR 2026 **BUDGET $75,000 IN-KIND**

We intend to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured.

WORKFORCE

RECRUITMENT - DIRECT COMPANY/PROSPECT SUPPORT

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNICATE/MANAGE PROSPECT PIPELINE

As we build interest with effective marketing and advertising campaigns, it's equally important to consistently share the benefits of living and working in our region. Through automated email marketing powered by HubSpot, we can deliver timely, targeted messages that showcase career opportunities, quality of life, and regional strengths.

HubSpot also allows us to track engagement and activity from potential job seekers, giving us valuable insights to refine our outreach and ensure our talent attraction efforts remain both personal and data-driven.

ALLOTTED BUDGET $50,000
RECOMMENDED BUDGET $70,000

PLAN FOR 2026

In 2026, we will partner with consultants to strengthen our outreach on several fronts. First, we will build on our existing database by developing a strategy that uses automated emails to segment contacts and deliver more targeted messaging. Second, we will create a new automated campaign to engage incoming contacts and align those touchpoints with our current marketing efforts. Finally, we will refine and deploy targeted messaging aimed at individuals affected by layoffs to ensure we reach those most likely to be exploring new opportunities. With additional funding, we can enhance all of this work to target more people in our funnel.

HR WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT COMPANY EVENTS

Meetings are held four times per year with a goal of sharing information and tools that HR Professionals can use to help attract talent. Since January 2025, we've held four events with an overall total of approximately 200 people attending.

We've shared information on the following programs or services:

- ND Department of Commerce (Technical Skills Training Grant, ROOT Grant Program and Global Talent Office), ND Department of Human Services (Daycare/Childcare grants), Job Service ND, Rural MN Cep, Golden Path Solutions, Be More Colorful, Lightning Recruitment, LiveinFargo.com, FMWF Concierge and Company Culture Program.

As a follow-up to each event, we've connected individuals to programs that they specifically request more information on. Our recent regional workforce survey connected 173 companies to the programming and services of dozens of organizations.

2025 ALLOCATION: $10,000 This covers venue, food, and beverage costs for the meetings.

PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $10,000

We intend to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured.

WORKFORCE

RECRUITMENT - DIRECT COMPANY/PROSPECT SUPPORT

FARGO MOORHEAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

RECRUITMENT TOOLS

LIGHTNING RECRUITMENT

Lightning Recruitment aims to help companies find pockets of talent who would be interested in moving to the FM region (i.e. a positive wage differential and attractive cost of living compared to their current geography). This is done by using data from Lightcast and Seekout, data tools that can provide a range of information from basic demographic data to contact names of individuals who fit the criteria that the company sets. Each solution provided to companies is based on their unique hiring needs.

With the Lightning Program, the GFMEDC is addressing specific challenges outlined from the Data & Analytics Summit. Those include:

- A shortage of prime-age workers
- Projected shortfalls in critical roles, some due to workforce nearing retirement age

COMPANIES ASSISTED 2025

- Red River Commodities
- Cass County Electric
- Aldevron
- American Crystal Sugar
- RDO Equipment
- TrueNorth Steel
- Butler Machinery
- Forum Communications
- Bobcat
- Aldevron
- Microsoft

2025 ALLOCATIONS

Lightcast Developer: $18,000
Fully funded through FARMS in 2025

Seekout: $4,500
GFMEDC Workforce Budget

"The Fargo Moorhead EDC was a great tool for us in generating a list of possible candidates for our open position, based on search criteria that we were able to tailor to our specific needs in terms of both experience and geography. Additionally, they are a wonderful resource for promotional pieces that we can utilize to help out-of-the-area candidates fully realize the potential and perks of living and working in our local community!"

SARA HASTINGS, SENIOR HR BUSINESS PARTNER
FORUM COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY

LEARN MORE

GFMEDC Blog Post | Lightning Recruitment Case Study | WARN Notice Recruitment Case Study

MONITORING LAYOFFS AND INVITING TALENT TO CONSIDER THE FM AREA

Companies in the Fargo-Moorhead region face significant challenges in identifying and engaging the talent necessary for business growth. To address this issue effectively, it is crucial to resolve it within a timeframe of 30 to 90 days. Using national Worker Adjustment Retraining Notifications (WARNs), we can identify mass-layoffs of talent that is needed in the Fargo-Moorhead Region. Using our data tools, we can capture contact information of those affected by mass layoffs and target them with SMS marketing to consider the FM region for their next career move.

TOOLS UTILIZED

Lightcast, SeekOut, Hubspot

WHAT'S AHEAD

We plan to run a campaign to contact those impacted by the Hormel layoffs in Austin, MN in Q4 of 2025.

PLAN FOR 2026

We intend to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured.

BUDGET $22,500

WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INDUSTRY SECTOR WORKFORCE PROFILES

The Fargo Moorhead region is at a critical moment: employers are expanding across manufacturing, bioscience, healthcare, autonomous systems, and ag-tech, but aligning talent with demand remains a challenge. Our industry profiles highlight the skills, certifications, and competencies most in demand—today and tomorrow—and connect them to actionable solutions through the Promising Practices Toolkit, including training pathways, employer-education partnerships, inclusive hiring strategies, and data-driven planning tools. By using these insights, our community can close skill gaps, strengthen workforce readiness, and ensure local companies thrive and compete globally.

PLAN FOR 2026 **BUDGET - STAFF TIME**

No budget required to complete - already included in software costs.

WORKFORCE SURVEY

The Fargo Moorhead workforce survey provides critical, data-driven insights that help investors and business leaders understand regional talent trends, anticipate workforce needs, and identify strategic growth opportunities. In 2024, we captured 111 surveys representing 23% of the regional workforce contributed data that informed workforce programs, guided employer connections, and shaped regional economic planning. Most recently, we captured 173 surveys representing 25% of the region's employees. By leveraging these insights, investors can better align resources, support business growth, and strengthen the region's long-term competitiveness.

PLAN FOR 2026 **BUDGET $2,500**

Goal of 225 companies and 33% of the regions workforce captured.

BIOSCIENCE CAREER EXPLORATION

The Bioscience Career Exploration provides students the opportunity to connect directly with admissions representatives and faculty from five regional institutions—NDSU, MSUM, Concordia, M-State, and NDSCS to explore continuing education pathways that can set them up for long-term success in a bioscience career. Additionally, students engage with industry representatives to learn about the wide range of careers and innovative work happening across the region. In 2025, the Bioscience Career Exploration brought in 50 high school students and 60 college students.

ALLOTTED BUDGET $0 - NEED SPONSORS
RECOMMENDED BUDGET $30,000

PLAN FOR 2026

Our goal in 2026 is 300 students interacting with companies and higher education.

EXHIBITOR COMPANIES

FM Science Museum
Thermo Fisher Scientific
UND Center for Innovation
NSF I-Corps Hub Great Plains
CorVent Medical
NDSU Office of Research and Creative Activity (RCA)
Thin Air Surfaces
Roers
Golden Path Solutions
Sartorius
Signum
National Agricultural Genotyping Center (NAGC)
NDSU Dr. Thomas Glass Biotech Innovation Core
NDSU Microbiological Sciences
Aldevron
MaxCyte
Houser Labs
Sanford Health

WORKFORCE
RETENTION

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMPANY CULTURE PROGRAM

The Company Culture Program started in 2023, with support from the North Dakota Department of Commerce. The need for such a program was also expressed through a workforce survey conducted in 2024 in partnership with FMHRA that identified Company Culture as a top (#2) area of interest for HR professionals to work on. In 2025, it ranked as the top issue. The program contains two pieces:

- A virtual and in-person networking space where human resource professionals can learn from each other, explore different aspects of company culture and share best practices.
- To support an assessment of a company's culture, the GFMEDC has developed a survey. The assessment tool is offered in multiple languages with responses kept anonymous.

2025 BUDGET

Funding provided through ND Department of Commerce $30,000

COMPANIES ASSISTED

- Bobcat
- Cardinal IG
- RDO
- Border States
- Fargo Glass & Paint
- DSG
- Ulteig
- Butler
- FMWF Chamber
- Marvin
- Gate City Bank
- BCBS
- Bell Bank
- Aldevron
- Sanford

"I've been involved in the Company Culture Program with the EDC because I believe that workplace culture is one of the most powerful ways to attract and retain talent. This initiative has done an incredible job of highlighting the vibrant, people-first cultures that exist across many companies in the Fargo-Moorhead area. It's not just about showcasing great places to work—it's about telling the story of a community full of opportunity, innovation, and belonging. If we want to bring more people to Fargo, this is exactly the kind of story we need to be telling."

TERI W.
TALENT ACQUISTION SPECIALIST, DAKOTA SUPPLY GROUP

PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $11,500

Goal is 45 companies taking part in this initiative.

WORKFORCE
RECRUITMENT - TARGETED AUDIENCE
ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CREATIVE CAMPAIGNS

FARGO, FOR GOOD CAMPAIGN (ALUMNI & BOOMERANG)

This targeted marketing campaign aimed at encouraging alumni and those with ties to the region to consider moving back home, tapping into their sense of connection and nostalgia for the region.
The campaign featured two strategic giveaways that drew strong interest and helped us collect contact information from more than 19,000 people, providing an opportunity to build a long-term pipeline of potential returners.

In addition to the giveaways, the campaign showcased a series of engaging ads and videos highlighting the quality of life, career opportunities, and community connections that make our area unique. A year-long automated email campaign was also developed to continue engaging users.

VENDOR PARTNERS

Abovo Spotlight AdShark OnSharp

2025 ALLOCATION: $350,000

This includes: $250,000 in grants funds from ND Department of Commerce, $70,000 in match funds from the GFMEDC and $30,000 of in-kind.

- Videography - $90,000.00
- Marketing - $100,000.00
- Website Development - $30,000.00
- Advertising Spending - $70,000.00
- Hubspot Workflows* - $30,000.00 **Hubspot subscription paid for by GFMEDC Dollars*

LINKS TO VIDEOS

Family Alumni Moving Back Commute Times

RESULTS

TOTALS FROM JANUARY-OCTOBER FOR SMALL TOWNS AND FARGO, FOR GOOD CAMPAIGNS

12.2 MILLION	204,000+	19,900+
TOTAL IMPRESSIONS	ACTIVE USERS TO WEBSITE	CONTACT INFORMATION ACQUIRED

WORKFORCE

RECRUITMENT - TARGETED AUDIENCE ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SMALL TOWN CAMPAIGN

In this campaign, our organization developed three ad themes, including four engaging videos, to highlight why individuals and families may want to live and work in smaller communities. The messaging focused on lifestyle, opportunity, and sense of community.

The campaign also included a click-to-learn-more (or a call to action) feature, directing individuals to a landing page where they can sign up for more information and receive a series of emails featuring Southeast North Dakota communities. We worked directly with representatives from small towns to gather content that reflects the unique features and amenities of their communities.

People who engaged with the ads had the opportunity to reach out for more information, and we are committed to making personal connections with those individuals or connecting them directly with small-town representatives.

VENDOR PARTNERS

H2M Brand Haus Spotlight OnSharp Orange142 Off Color Media

2025 ALLOCATION: $350,000

This includes: $250,000 in grants funds from ND Department of Commerce, $70,000 in match funds from the GFMEDC and $30,000 of in-kind.

- Videography - $90,000.00
- Marketing - $100,000.00
- Website Development - $30,000.00
- Advertising Spending - $70,000.00
- Hubspot Workflows* - $30,000.00
  **Hubspot subscription paid for by GFMEDC Dollars*

ADDITIONAL VIDEOS Healthcare Schools Commute

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TALENT ATTRACTION (RECRUITMENT) IN 2026

To stay competitive in attracting top talent, it's essential to keep content and materials fresh and relevant. This includes regular updates to talent attraction websites, new videos, and dynamic marketing assets (like ads) that highlight opportunities in high-demand industries.

Leveraging data-driven tools and consulting to support talent recruitment efforts—using analytics, automated communications, and targeted surveys to measure brand awareness optimizes outreach and increases our chances of continued success.

By combining compelling creative with actionable data, we'll strengthen our regional brand and ensure it resonates with jobseekers.

DETERMINING CAMPAIGN DIRECTION

To maximize performance, our team will review the historical campaign data, including designated market areas (DMAs), tactics, and creative materials that have driven strong results in previous efforts. This will guide our strategic recommendations and ensure we're focusing our investment on the most effective channels and audiences.

Additionally, we're excited to incorporate GFMEDC's opt-in user database into the campaign. Leveraging this first-party data for retargeting will allow us to add an advanced layer of targeting to help move users further down the conversion funnel, driving deeper engagement and improving overall ROI.

With the help of a talented marketing firm, our team will evaluate and decide on the best marketing campaign to build upon the success we've seen to date. Each campaign we do will incorporate automated email messaging to extend our reach and keep the message top of mind for candidates. Perception surveys done at the beginning and after our campaigns will provide additional data on campaign effectiveness.

EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL CAMPAIGNS

Recruiting Back to the Region
Building on the success of the "Fargo, for Good" campaign—which engaged both alumni and individuals interested in the region—data showed that most people who requested more information had existing connections to the area, whether through family, friends, or prior residency. The proposed campaign would continue to focus on these "boomerangs"—individuals who have moved away but maintain ties to the region, encouraging them to consider returning and contributing to the community's growth.

Family Tour
Building on the successful approach used by the ND Department of Commerce (in Grand Forks), this campaign would focus on inviting families to the Fargo region for a curated visit that showcases the area's quality of life, amenities, and sense of community. The experience would be designed to help participants envision what it's like to live, work, and thrive here. Connecting visitors with potential employers during their stay would further strengthen their ties to the region and increase the likelihood of relocation. This would ideally be a partnership with the State of North Dakota.

PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $210,000

Creative Campaigns

- Includes all writing, management of project and marketing and creative materials and videos. Also includes giveaway prize money to entice viewers to provide their contact information for more information (form submissions).
    - May include a video that highlights winter

AD PLACEMENTS: $250,000

Traditional Google and Meta (Facebook) ads along with other ads and potential sponsored content.

PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $250,000

In 2026, we will continue to elevate our regional brand by investing strategically in advertising that reaches the audiences most likely to consider moving to Fargo Moorhead. We believe this work is essential to building long-term awareness and attracting individuals who are a strong fit for our community. Our campaigns will target people based on their occupations and skill sets, focusing on those whose expertise aligns with our region's workforce needs. We will also concentrate on regions of the country where the cost of living is significantly higher, highlighting the improved quality of life that Fargo-Moorhead can offer. By tailoring our messaging to people who would genuinely benefit from living and working here, we can strengthen our brand, broaden our reach, and attract talent that contributes meaningfully to our region's growth.

PERCEPTION SURVEYING

To ensure our marketing efforts are effective and our brand identity continues to strengthen, we believe it is essential to survey our target audiences before and after each campaign. Beginning in 2026, we will implement this practice as a critical step in understanding whether our campaigns are truly resonating and performing as intended.

Perception surveys provide meaningful data about how individuals view our region and its brand. They go beyond surface-level feedback to explore the emotional and psychological connections that shape opinions. By measuring these perceptions, we gain valuable insights that help refine our messaging, inform strategic decisions, and sharpen our competitive edge.

PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $40,000

We will conduct two surveys of our targeted audiences during 2026.

WORKFORCE

DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM - ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WORKFORCE SUMMIT

REGIONAL DATA & ANALYTICS WORKFORCE SUMMIT 2025

With 20+ years of experience in supporting workforce development in the greater Fargo Moorhead region, and EDC staff with more than 60 years of combined experience providing demand-driven workforce development solutions, the Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation (GFMEDC) saw the need to bring together regional and state leaders to have data-driven discussions about this critical topic for our market.

Due to our long-standing partnership with Lightcast, the global leader in labor market analytics, the GFMEDC was able to share the significant talent needs that our area companies are projecting - upwards of 40,000 job postings annually to fill new and replacement positions. If successful, we could witness the growth of our regional labor force from 152,000 to more than 164,000 by January 2029.

In key industry sectors of healthcare/bioscience, agtech/autonomous systems, and manufacturing/trades, we are expecting significant shortages of workers as outlined in the industry talent profiles developed by the GFMEDC and Lightcast and available **HERE**.

Our workforce challenge is exacerbated by national demographic and societal issues never before faced by our country, but for which we have to acknowledge and overcome if we are to compete and win the war for talent.

Our partners at Microsoft hosted the event that brought in 140 attendees for a **keynote** from Josh Wright of Lightcast and various breakout groups throughout the day to deep dive into the data findings. Additionally, we capitalized our time with Lightcast and captured a **Q&A style video interview** the following day. This event lead to a request from Lightcast to collaborate on a **webinar** recapping the event.

VENDOR PARTNERS

Lightcast Microsoft

2025 ALLOCATION: $30,000

This budget covered costs involved to bring in Lightcast representatives, food & beverage, photography and videography

PLAN FOR 2026

BUDGET $20,000

We will continue driving forward on the action items identified during the Regional Data and Analytics Summit on June 5th, 2025, ensuring the momentum built during our discussions translates into meaningful progress. This budget number is lower as we will not need to bring in a keynote speaker.

COMMUNICATIONS
AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A critical part of our work is maintaining a strong, consistent brand and clearly communicating our goals, strategies, and results. Our annual meeting and annual report serve as cornerstone touchpoints, keeping investors informed, demonstrating measurable progress, and elevating key business development and workforce recruitment success stories. These efforts not only illustrate our impact but also deepen alignment and trust with our stakeholders.

Beyond these flagship initiatives, our broader communications ecosystem amplifies our message throughout the year. Through our website and regular outreach—including newsletters, blogs, earned media, and social media—we continuously highlight the achievements of regional primary-sector companies, share insights into our evolving economy, and position our region as a compelling destination for businesses and talent. These channels also reinforce the value of the GFMEDC's work by providing real-time updates, data-driven storytelling, and visibility into initiatives that support growth, competitiveness, and long-term economic vitality.

PARTNERS OnSharp Spotlight FMCVB FMWF Chamber Livewire

"UN"ANNUAL MEETING

A yearly event to share our work and celebrate the success of the companies we've supported. Showcased booths highlight companies and partners doing great things in the region. It gives our investors and partners an opportunity to understand what is really going on in the market and how we are supporting economic growth. Our organization provides a short presentation to highlight more of our work.

2025 ALLOCATION: $25,000 **PARTNER** Livewire

ALLOTTED BUDGET $25,000
RECOMMENDEDBUDGET $30,000

$10,000 Sponsorship from Alerus

- Ticket and Sponsor Pack Sales $7,000
- Remaining costs covered by EDC Communications budget

PLAN FOR 2026

We intend to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured.

ANNUAL REPORT

Our easy to navigate annual report is designed as an intuitive, web-based experience that guides readers through our results, business development milestones, and workforce-attraction efforts. This digital format not only spotlights success stories and the companies behind them but also provides the data and insights that substantiate our progress and impact. It is a vital tool for communicating our impact, elevating regional success stories, highlighting local companies, and presenting the data that validates our achievements. We refer to it frequently throughout the year.

2025 ALLOCATION: $7,000 **PARTNER** Spotlight

- $4,800 for Spotlight to design and $2,400 for hosting costs

ALLOTED BUDGET $7,500
RECOMMENDED BUDGET $10,000

PLAN FOR 2026

We intend to continue utilizing the same process as currently structured, but are accounting for increased design and hosting fees.

COMMUNICATIONS
AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WEBSITE MAINTENANCE, COLI, WIDGETS — 2026 BUDGET $21,500

The GFMEDC website serves as the central hub for communicating and marketing our region as a premier destination for business development, while also acting as a key resource for local primary-sector companies. It delivers real-time, decision-ready data on the regional business climate—from labor force trends and talent availability to industry growth indicators and cost-of-doing-business metrics.
As companies evaluate expansion or relocation opportunities, the website offers immediate access to the information they rely on most, including:

- Current workforce and demographic data to support talent-focused decision-making.
- Up-to-date economic indicators such as job postings, industry performance, and wage information.
- Business development tools including site selector resources, targeted industry insights, and regional success stories.
- Support for local employers, providing workforce attraction materials, regional data, and access to GFMEDC programs and initiatives.

By consolidating this information in an easy-to-access, constantly updated digital platform, the GFMEDC website ensures companies, partners, and stakeholders have a trusted, authoritative source to understand the region's strengths, opportunities, and competitive advantages. This makes it one of the most important communication and marketing assets for advancing our region's economic growth.

PARTNER OnSharp

VIDEO PRODUCTION TOOLS — 2026 BUDGET $3,500

Supporting primary-sector businesses is our mission, and having the right tools ensures our team can both carry out this work effectively and demonstrate its impact to our investors and partners. Video and design platforms are essential in helping us communicate why our work matters and the results it delivers.
Loom provides staff with an easy-to-use video creation tool that allows them to capture updates, highlight business successes, and communicate complex information quickly and clearly. Vimeo and YouTube enable us to distribute those videos widely, helping us promote the region, share data-driven insights, and showcase the value we provide.

Adobe's suite of creative tools equips our team to design high-quality materials efficiently and professionally. From postcards and infographics to detailed proposals for new business projects, Adobe allows us to produce polished, visually compelling resources that strengthen our message and support our economic development goals.

Together, these tools enhance our ability to tell our story, demonstrate impact, and advance our mission of supporting the businesses that drive our region's growth.

PROGRAMS Loom Adobe Vimeo

FLOURISHING INITIATIVE — STAFF TIME

The GFMEDC's 2022 board developed a Strategic Playbook to help our region grow and thrive. At the heart of this work is a simple purpose: cultivate an economic environment where all people and organizations flourish. One of our big goals is to build a shared framework for what "regional flourishing" looks like and to define our unique place in the changing world of work. Through this effort, we hope to support things like stronger financial stability, more opportunities for lifelong learning, better mental and physical health, stronger connections and sense of belonging, richer cultural experiences, and a more inspiring and connected place to live.

COMMUNICATIONS
AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES - ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING

FARGO MOORHEAD
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FREELANCE WRITING SUPPORT — 2026 BUDGET $6,000

High-quality writing is essential to communicating the value of our mission and ensuring our work is clearly understood by investors, partners, and the broader community. Engaging freelance writers expands our capacity to produce compelling, well-crafted content that explains complex information, highlights business successes, and elevates our regional story. Whether developing articles, blog posts, proposals, or marketing materials, freelance writing support ensures we can consistently deliver clear, professional messaging that resonates with our audiences and reinforces the impact of our work.

PARTNERS Various local freelance writers

SUPPORT FOLKWAYS COMMUNITY WORK — 2026 BUDGET $5,000

We understand the value of strong partnerships—especially those where mission alignment creates meaningful synergies that elevate everyone's work. Supporting Folkways provides direct, tangible benefits through access to hundreds of high-quality event images that help us showcase our region as vibrant, active, and community-minded. The partnership also delivers important indirect benefits, as Folkways' events and gatherings strengthen the social fabric of our community, making this a place where people want to live, engage, and put down roots.

PARTNER Folkways

HUBSPOT & CONSULTING SUPPORT — 2026 BUDGET $24,000

A marketing communications platform helps us automate our communications to support talent attraction, business development and investor relations. HubSpot is a central technology supporting regular automated communication to the almost 20,000 contacts within talent attraction marketing. It supports automated communications to site selectors and local primary-sector companies. It is also the mechanism through which we provide our newsletter content to investors and partners.

PARTNERS/PROGRAMS OnSharp Hubspot