



# FARGO MOORHEAD

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# STRATEGIC PLAYBOOK

2026–2028

*Cultivate an  
economic environment  
where all people  
and organizations  
flourish.*



**CORE PURPOSE**

*why we exist*



# CORE BUSINESS

## *what we do*

### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR PRIMARY-SECTOR GROWTH

GFMEDC's core business is business development that drives **primary-sector growth**. This work focuses on creating, securing, and sustaining economic opportunity by helping primary sector businesses choose, stay, and grow in the Greater Fargo-Moorhead region.

Business development, in this context, is an integrated set of responsibilities that operate together to produce and fill good jobs, capital investment, and long-term regional resilience and competitiveness.

GFMEDC's core business is expressed through **three interdependent pillars**. All three are core to the organization's mission and success. They are differentiated by relative impact when priorities and tradeoffs must be made, not by importance.

## **PILLAR 1**

### **Primary-Sector Business Recruitment**

GFMEDC leads the recruitment of new primary-sector employers to the region.

#### **This includes:**

- Proactively identifying and pursuing target companies and sectors
- Competing for site selection and expansion projects
- Coordinating workforce, infrastructure, incentive, and policy conversations
- Positioning the region to win net-new investment and jobs

Recruitment is a core driver of new economic opportunity, expanding and diversifying the region's primary-sector base.

A business recruitment strategy is core to our work in the important pillar. This strategy, led by the EDC management, involves key leadership from the organizations most engaged in supporting business recruitment (utilities, local governments, state agencies (ex. Commerce, DEED, Agriculture, Job Service, etc.), developers, education, and others. A business development taskforce of the EDC will serve as the body to support this critical work.

## **PILLAR 2**

### **Retention and Expansion of Primary-Sector Companies**

GFMEDC supports the continued success and growth of existing primary-sector employers.

#### **This includes:**

- Building trusted relationships with employers
- Identifying expansion, reinvestment, and risk signals early
- Coordinating solutions to workforce, infrastructure, regulatory challenges and other
- key criteria to support our targeted industry sectors
- Supporting reinvestment decisions that keep and grow jobs locally

Retention and expansion are the highest-ROI drivers of sustained economic value, protecting

the region's existing economic base while generating additional growth from companies already rooted here. A unique aspect of the greater Fargo Moorhead regional economy is the

diversity of the industry base, which currently ranks as the 11th most diverse metro in the country (amongst 387 metros). GFMEDC has the opportunity in our own "back yard" to enhance the existing resilience and momentum that may be the envy of other regional economies. This also allows GFMEDC to showcase actions being taken that will support our attraction of additional companies in these key sectors.

## **PILLAR 3**

### **New Business Development and Pipeline Creation**

GFMEDC contributes to the development of future primary-sector employers.

#### **This includes:**

- Supporting entrepreneurship and new company formation in partnership with others
- Strengthening innovation, capital, and talent pipelines
- Helping create the conditions for future recruitment and expansion success

New business development is an enabling driver that builds long-term resilience, diversification, and future capacity for the regional economy. And like with the overall diversity of our economy, the entrepreneurial ecosystem that has been developed in our region over the past fifteen years has created a competitive advantage to our resiliency and the expectation of nearly all companies to want to be in markets that have strategically built the conditions for innovation.

### **These three pillars reinforce one another.**

- Retention and expansion deepen and multiply that economic value and impact over time.
- Recruitment brings new employers into the region to increase diversity resiliency to the economy
- New business development creates the future pipeline that sustains long-term growth.

**Together, they define GFMEDC's core business of business development for primary sector growth.**

## Workforce as a Cross-Cutting Enabler of Primary-Sector Growth

Workforce is the most significant constraint on primary-sector growth and therefore a critical enabler across GFMEDC's core business. It is an integrated consideration that shapes retention, recruitment, and future business development decisions. The recent Regional Data & Analytics Workforce Summit reinforced the impact workforce constraints, generated by demographic and societal considerations, will have on the economy in the coming decade, and thus a coordinated effort is imperative.

GFMEDC's role is not to own workforce solutions, but to ensure workforce realities are embedded in business development strategy and that regional workforce efforts are aligned to employer demand. Through Innovate28, workforce priorities are coordinated across partners and tied directly to measurable business development outcomes.

### For the GFMEDC, workforce integration means:

- Elevating workforce risks and constraints that affect retention, expansion, and recruitment decisions
- Aligning recruitment targets and growth strategies with realistic workforce capacity
- Supporting long-term talent pipelines that sustain future business development
- Success is ultimately achieved when workforce alignment enables employers to choose the region, stay in the region, and grow in the region.



# CORE VALUES

*what we believe and how we behave*

## **SHOW GENUINE CARE**

Be Helpful

Earn Trust & Show Trust

Be Human-Centered

Believe in the Community

## **CREATE NEW POSSIBILITIES**

Show Curiosity

Be Connected

Work Collaboratively

## **MAKE IT HAPPEN**

Display Passion

Act Strategically

Be Resourceful

# CORE AUDIENCE

*who we must reach*

## PRIMARY AUDIENCE

Our investors and primary sector businesses

## SECONDARY AUDIENCE

Our Partners

## TERTIARY AUDIENCE

Working families and individuals who are unaware  
of what the region has to offer them



# STRATEGIC PILLARS

*how we build success*

## Business Concierge

We offer proactive, responsive, and high-touch service, connecting our clients and prospects with the right tools, resources, and programs to help them succeed.

## Workforce Alignment

Through partnership, we co-create and implement strategies to proactively address workforce challenges in the areas of development, recruitment, retention/acclimation, and automation. Our specific leadership focus will be in the area of workforce recruitment.

## Ecosystem Development

We intentionally catalyze, convene, and collaborate to solve the biggest problems, create new opportunities, and drive economic vitality in our region.

## Data & Analytics

Serving as a lead organization to ensure we have the systems and partnerships to provide useful and relevant information for decision-making.

## Digital Marketing and PR/Communications

Utilize our efforts in these areas to support a more compelling Brand for the region.



# STRATEGIC VISION

## *Narrative*

### **Purpose**

Cultivate an environment where all people and organizations flourish.

That is the Greater Fargo Moorhead EDC's purpose and north star.

Flourishing means a region where economic performance and quality of life reinforce each other. Where businesses grow because people want to be here, and people want to be here because the region supports lives worth building.

### **Intentional Growth**

Since 2018, this region's economic development efforts have generated more than \$9 billion in economic impact. That number reflects what is possible when a metro of this size executes with discipline and coordination.

The next chapter is larger. The GFMEDC's aspiration is to drive \$10 billion or more in new total economic impact into the next decade, while simultaneously building the conditions that make that growth durable.

Growth alone is not the goal. The goal is a region where economic expansion strengthens quality of life, and where quality of life attracts the talent and investment that sustain further growth. That reinforcing cycle is what flourishing looks like in practice.

To get there, the region will need to understand and actively manage the conditions that determine whether people come, stay, and invest their lives here. Financial stability, lifelong learning, physical and mental health, spirituality, belonging and connection, cultural engagement, and a connected built environment. These seven domains of flourishing will be tracked with the same discipline the region applies to economic indicators, because they are economic indicators.

This is a metro in the top 3% nationally for economic diversity, with a track record of execution, and an entrepreneurial ecosystem that has produced and retained companies across industries for generations. The aspiration is to build on that foundation so that when people evaluate where to start a business, grow a career, or raise a family, this region is among the first places they consider.

## Where We're Going

Within the next decade, our metro will be recognized as one of the strongest metros in the country for economic opportunity and quality of place. This recognition will be based on measurable results.

Businesses can attract and retain the talent they need. Primary sector companies expand here due to a reliable workforce pipeline, ready infrastructure, and a responsive policy environment. Existing companies reinvest because conditions are favorable. Prospective companies see a region with a proven record of execution.

People choose this region to build careers, afford homes, raise families, and form genuine connections. Newcomers are welcomed and integrated. Young people, including the region's most diverse generation, can envision a future here and have clear pathways to achieve it.

The region's entrepreneurial strength is preserved and strengthened. Companies are founded, grow, and remain here. Our metro functions as a unified region across two states, viewing the river as a shared asset rather than a dividing line.

## How We Get There

The GFMEDC's core function is business development for primary sector growth, structured around three interdependent pillars: recruiting new employers to expand and diversify the economic base, retaining and expanding existing companies, and building a pipeline of new ventures and entrepreneurial capacity to sustain long-term growth.

Workforce is central to all three and remains the most significant constraint on growth in this region and among peer markets. The GFMEDC integrates workforce considerations into business development strategy and ensures initiatives, coordinated with regional partners and supported by Innovate28, align with employer needs.

Building a strong region requires collective effort. The GFMEDC does not claim credit for every achievement. Our role is to help the region coordinate efforts effectively and with discipline, ensuring the ecosystem remains robust and continues to create opportunities for future generations.



## How We Will Assess Progress

### **The GFMEDC has set the following outcome goals for the current strategic period (2025–2028):**

- More than \$5 billion in cumulative economic impact from expansion and relocation activity. This represents total new revenue added to the sales of companies in our region.
- More than 3,500 new jobs, with an average total compensation above \$74,000 across new positions generated by GFMEDC-supported projects.
- Twelve thousand additional workers added to the regional labor force by January 2029.
- Top-quartile national rankings for talent attraction and job growth among all metros.

### **Supporting Targets**

Achieving these outcomes will require significant project volume. The GFMEDC estimates that upwards of 130 company expansions, relocations, and creations will be needed over the Innovate28 period to reach the workforce and economic impact goals above.

### **Building the Flourishing Framework**

Deploy a regional flourishing measurement framework that establishes baseline data across the domains and informs planning by employers, government, education, and other critical partners.

### **Monitoring and Assessment**

Progress toward these goals will be monitored through the GFMEDC's KPI dashboard and, once deployed, the regional flourishing measurement framework. Together, these tools provide the board, investors, and partners with a clear assessment of whether the work is delivering the necessary results.

The following pages of the Strategic Playbook detail the initiatives, budgets, and KPIs that will operationalize this vision over the next three years. A review/update of the playbook will occur in 2028 to provide a continued framework of activities best implemented to achieve the economic outcomes envisioned in this document.

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

## *how we will get there*

The following pages will provide a dashboard of the core programming across our three organizational pillars of Business Development, Workforce Development, and Communications & Community Initiatives.

Each of the programs were developed with the intent to implement them over the course of the next three years, funding dependent. Those programs that are outlined will be implemented in 2026, and those shaded will be addressed as funding comes available. In addition, the organization will pivot to add new or delete programming if it better aligns with our goals.

*Please know that the digital version of this document has links to more details on each of the dashboard programming items and/or plans developed to support our work.*

# 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 & 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 128 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*

# Workforce Development 2026

## PILLARS

## PROGRAMMING

**PRIORITY PROGRAMMING**  
**REDUCED FUNDING**  
 ELIMINATED PROGRAMMING  
 DUE TO REDUCED FUNDING

### Recruitment

#### REGIONAL BRANDING

##### Branding Tools

**Program \$46,500**  
**Staff \$41,800**

*LivInFMArea 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*

##### FM Region Workforce Survey

**Program \$2,700**  
**Staff \$34,900**

*Conduct/produce report & event annually*

##### Workforce Summit 2026

**\$20,000**

*Follow up from the Data & Analytics Workforce Summit*

##### 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*

**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*

# GOALS 2025-2028

## *how we keep score*

**Having started a new set of goals for the organization in 2025, the EDC is taking an aggressive position to:**

- More than \$5 billion in cumulative economic impact from expansion and relocation activity. This represents total new revenue added to the sales of companies in our region.
- More than 3,500 new jobs, with an average total compensation above \$74,000 across new positions generated by GFMEDC-supported projects.
- Twelve thousand additional workers added to the regional labor force by January 2029.
- Top-quartile national rankings for talent attraction and job growth among all metros.

