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County Administrator

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MEMO

TO: County Commission
FROM: Robert W. Wilson
Date: November 12, 2024
Subject: Innovate28 Update

The 2025 County Budget includes \$2.5M for Innovate28. Innovate28 is a partnership between The Chamber and the Greater Fargo-Moorhead Economic Development Corporation (GFMEDC). The initiative is designed to enhance our regional workforce, boost economic growth, and position the Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo area as a premier destination for business expansion.

2025 County funds are budgeted to match funds raised in the private sector. On November 8th Innovate28 leaders briefed Commissioners Peterson, Grindberg and Administrator Wilson on fundraising efforts to date. Innovate28 reported private investment pledges of \$1,166,125. Innovate28 organizers report strong momentum and an expectation additional contributions will be secured in the near future.

On Monday, November 18th the Commission will consider approval of matching funds in an amount of \$1.2M representing private sector funding raised to date. Additionally, Innovate28 leaders are encouraged to update the Commission again on January 6, 2025, with the expectation of requesting additional matching funds based on additional private sector contributions.

Motion: Authorize a \$1,200,000 payment (after January 1,2025) out of the budgeted \$2,500,000 as partial payment for a matching contribution to the Innovate 28 initiative.



innovate₂₈



Advancing regional competitiveness through
partnership and collaboration in the Greater FM Region.

FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

The FM region has a long history of success and prosperity and is known as a central hub for exceptional healthcare and higher education. Its labor force participation consistently outpaces the nation, and it enjoys a highly diversified local economy. The region's rich legacy of innovation continues to cultivate an entrepreneurial ecosystem envied by other regions. We are now positioned as a prospective global leader at the intersection of technology and agriculture.

But we cannot take these strengths and this momentum for granted.

Today's economic trends are pressuring the systems and infrastructure that have made our region resilient. Demand for specific knowledge and skills is rising, healthcare needs are growing, and area businesses continue to struggle to find talent to meet their growth demands. At the same time, our community is competing to be valued by future workers as a vibrant and welcoming community where they can flourish.

Providing short-term relief for these issues and scattered solutions will result in poor outcomes or no action at all.

The Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) are uniquely positioned to lead and develop comprehensive solutions on behalf of the business community. Together they form a new economic and community development alliance that will work to align the efforts of key stakeholders over the next four years to address these challenges and advance the competitiveness of the region and its companies.

The 4-year collaborative plan Innovate28 charts a course for public and private sector leaders to work together on a system of support that will ensure continued economic growth and bring our region to global prominence.

The choice is to meet these challenges and thrive or lose ground. That is why we are investing in this work.

Please join us with your leadership and investment in [Innovate28](#).



TIFFANY LAWRENCE
President and CEO | Sanford Health
Campaign Co-Chair

Where we've been; where we're going.

In recent years, public and private investment have resourced programs with significant regional impact to and through the Chamber and EDC. From the Chamber's public policy and workforce leadership to the EDC's support of more than \$1 billion of private investment in the past five years, these programs have successfully reinforced the region's unique value proposition: An inviting community that thrives on innovation.

The Chamber and EDC have also helped attract over \$15M in new state and federal resources to further the region's business development and talent goals. The Innovate28 plan builds on this success and forms a new economic development partnership that:

- assigns specific targets and outcomes for the initiatives executed by each organization,
- maximizes impact through new avenues of coordination and cooperation, and
- provides a robust investor structure for oversight throughout the plan period.

The Chamber and EDC partnership is critical to the success of this plan and is a priority for both organizations. The work will be governed by a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that ensures clearly defined roles and full collaboration. The MOU features ongoing oversight meetings by investors with specific rules and procedures for refinement of the work over the four-year plan period and establishes the EDC as responsible for the management and administration of the effort. This approach ensures the plan is responsive to new technologies, opportunities, and the evolving interests of the region's business leadership.

Your investment in Innovate28 provides the resources to deliver on the strategies and initiatives that will achieve critical outcomes for our region.

INNOVATE28 WILL:

- Assist in growing the regional labor force by more than 12,000 workers by January 2029, representing 30% growth over historical rates
- Facilitate 130 company expansions or relocations (33% increase) creating more than 3,500 new jobs that will provide an annual compensation of more than \$74,000. When these jobs are created, the region will experience an additional \$1B in annual business sales.
- Ensure at least 28 of 38 local legislators (ND & MN) are aligned on policies prioritized by the regional business community (Currently 24 of 38 local legislators 100% aligned on priorities)

PEER COMPARISONS

- Secure designation in the top quartile MSA for Job Growth amongst the 200+ US small metros in the Milken Institute's Best Performing Cities list (currently ranked 65th)
- Achieve a Top 25% ranking in Lightcast Developer's National Scorecard for Talent Attraction (currently 27%) and top 40% for Talent Migration (currently 51%)

TALENT AND WORKFORCE

Ignite a high-performing workforce ecosystem that attracts, engages, and retains top talent.

North Dakota has one of the most severe workforce shortages in the United States, and Minnesota is facing a retirement boom in the next five years that will severely restrict growth. **Innovate28** addresses this growing talent crisis at a regional level by facilitating consistent, wide-ranging engagement and partnership between the education, nonprofit, and business community that matches workforce resources to employers' current and future hiring needs. The Chamber will serve as the coordinating organization to ensure the key players in the workforce system are aligned and providing the development, attraction, and retention of human capital needed for our companies to thrive. The following activities combine to deliver an authentic brand promise of a vibrant and diverse community that welcomes the next generation workforce.

ADDRESSING CURRENT WORKFORCE DEMANDS

- 1. Attract workers from outside the region through compelling digital campaigns and an online brand that showcases the region's companies, jobs, and people.** Using the LiveInFMArea.com website, Innovate28 will use direct-marketing tactics to recruit workers in occupations identified by regional employers across several of our key industry sectors including manufacturing, agtech, bioscience, autonomous systems, and healthcare. The website will also offer these workers seamless connection to the plan's other community acclimation programs.
- 2. Activate candidate interest by amplifying the exceptional culture of area companies.** **Innovate28** creates company culture accreditation standards to elevate the reputation of excellence and innovation of our region and its companies and fill open positions.
- 3. Integrate in-demand talent, their families and extended networks into the region's vibrant job market and unique culture.** **Innovate28's** Concierge Program ensures candidates and new hires cultivate genuine connections in the community through events, tours and introductions to volunteer 'icebreakers'.
- 4. Connect and retain highly skilled talent through networking, training and leadership development.** **Innovate28's** Professionals of Color, Women Connect, Young Professionals, and Leadership FMWF programs encourage community connections and involvement in making our region the best community in which to work and play.

DEVELOPING AND ALIGNING LOCAL TALENT

- 5. Coordinate efforts between education and industry partners to ensure future labor force needs are met.** **Innovate28** will serve as a catalyst for student development by hosting events such as EdVentures, Career Expos and Tech Tradeshows that directly connect our K-12 systems and the business community.
- 6. Align local talent with available jobs through responsive, demand-driven career pathways and customized hiring support.** **Innovate28's** proven Industry Sector Partnership (ISP) program ensures skill building and on-the-job training opportunities close the long-term supply-and-demand gap for regional employers in manufacturing, health, technology, agriculture, trades/construction, and other sectors while well attended job fairs, hiring workshops, and employer retention 'tool kits' help all employers find the resources and local talent they need today.

Jobs change lives. We cannot afford not to lead.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Each year, FM Region companies work to fill at least 19,000 positions vacated by those exiting the workforce, turnover and company growth. **Innovate28** addresses this demand over the next four years by achieving the following outcomes.

- Grow the regional labor force by more than 12,000 workers by January 2029, representing 30% growth over historical rates
- Achieve a Top 25% ranking in Lightcast Developer's National Scorecard for Talent Attraction (currently 27%) and top 40% for Talent Migration (currently 51%)

COMMITMENT TO DATA-DRIVEN COLLABORATION

Innovate28 Forms a region-wide, workforce group led by the Chamber that identifies challenges across the workforce system to ensure the appropriate organizations are engaged to develop and implement the most meaningful programs to serve our business community. A focus on data-driven decision making is foundational to this work and entire growth strategy. The EDC and Chamber will work collaboratively to track, analyze and share essential workforce data, and will use a robust set of software, data tools, online platforms and analysis to drive the strategies of the plan and track their progress.

Ongoing joint staff meetings ensure that the information and resources of each programming area are integrated internally and support the plan's business development and public policy work. The two organizations will identify and eliminate duplication and ensure the best use of available technology and community resources to achieve the plan's goals.

TARGETED INDUSTRIES SERVED

AG-TECH • ADVANCED MANUFACTURING • BIOSCIENCE • HEALTHCARE
TRADES/CONSTRUCTION • AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Secure a global reputation for retaining, growing, and attracting innovation-driven employers.

Companies in the region serving national and global markets have choices as to where they want to innovate and grow. The outside revenue they bring into the area, regardless of their size, undergirds the success of the larger business community and signals to industry leaders that the region is a great place to do business. Retaining and attracting these companies, from the smallest entrepreneurial effort to the largest employer, is critical to supporting infrastructure investment, building on our culture of innovation, and securing the community amenities sought after by today's workers. **Innovate28** supports their growth and showcases the competitive advantages, energy, and speed of doing business in our region first-hand. It also ensures our region's legacy of entrepreneurship continues to increase innovation across sectors and secure a larger share of companies in high-growth industries. The EDC will serve as the coordinating organization for the following strategies, ensuring close collaboration with local and state governments and key utility, finance, and workforce providers.

GROW OUR OWN

- 1. Help existing employers compete by connecting them with programs and services that support their growth and expansion.** **Innovate28's** Business Retention & Expansion Programming (BRE) ensures local companies with national and global markets have access to financial programs, are connected to the research and workforce capabilities of area educational institutions, enjoy expedited procedures for business investment, and can secure the support needed to stay and grow in the region.
- 2. Increase the economic impact of new ideas, products, and services in the region by ensuring start-up entrepreneurs have the assistance they need to succeed.** **Innovate28** helps maintain an ecosystem of support for entrepreneurs that includes a welcoming culture, access to resources, and points of connection to existing companies that are critical to them growing the industries of the future in our region.

ATTRACT INNOVATION & INVESTMENT

- 3. Invite new business investment into the community by sharing the region's unique value proposition with corporate site selectors and companies in other markets.** **Innovate28** captures the attention of corporate site selectors and other industry decision makers through consistent outreach and supporting and helping host events like the Cultivate, Bioscience Summit and Autonomous Nation. Robust industry profiles are shared with companies in external markets that expose companies to what our region has to offer.
- 4. Increase availability of land and infrastructure for companies looking to expand and relocate.** **Innovate28** moves critical properties through the necessary pre-development and pre-design work to be ready for development, then creates site descriptions and actively markets the properties to companies and consultants. Maintaining an array of shovel-ready industrial and commercial sites with access to utility and transportation infrastructure is critical to securing new investment from companies that cannot afford delays in production.

Growth is not promised. We cannot afford to stand still.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Regions with great jobs in high-growth industry sectors appeal to talent looking for a higher quality of life. This growth in workers attracts more companies looking to hire, enabling the region to reach the density of talent needed to fuel innovation and the region's competitiveness. Innovate28 ensures this critical growth by securing

- Facilitate 130 company expansions or relocations (33% increase) creating more than 3,500 new jobs that will provide an annual compensation of more than \$74,000. When these jobs are created, the region will experience an additional \$1B in annual business sales.
- Designation in the top quartile MSA for Job Growth amongst the 200+ US small metros in the Milken Institute's Best Performing Cities list (currently ranked 65th)

COMMITMENT TO DATA-DRIVEN COLLABORATION

Innovate28 ensures requests from existing company visits are sent to the appropriate partners allowing employer's needs to be addressed quickly and comprehensively. It promotes and connects the services of area organizations including Higher Education Institutions, Emerging Prairie/Grand Farm, Folkways and others through frequent network calls and meetings, and provides direct support to the individuals moving through these organizations. Software and data tools support service to existing companies while maintaining required confidentiality, and Salesforce, Hubspot, customized surveying and critical labor market data showcase and support the decision-making needs of expanding and relocating companies. All projects are analyzed to show the impact of jobs and investment on the local economy throughout the plan period.

TARGETED INDUSTRIES SERVED

AG-TECH • ADVANCED MANUFACTURING • BIOSCIENCE • AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS • HEALTHCARE

PUBLIC POLICY

Achieve the most competitive regional business environment in the Midwest.

Even in the most competitive business climates, fast-paced technological change and the needs of emerging industries require ongoing evaluation of regulatory, policy and legal frameworks. Barriers to entering the region's workforce can emerge including the availability of childcare, housing, transportation, and healthcare. New challenges in sourcing labor through employment-based immigration, transitioning military, and other talent groups that are critically important to employers can also arise. North Dakota's enactment of term limits elevates the importance of deepening the bench of interested public servants as well as providing continuity in educating leaders on these and other critical issues. At the same time, political polarization has resulted in reduced civic engagement by business leaders and challenges in finding candidates. Regional business leadership must be aware of and invited to help shape responses that will define our region's economic future and create healthy and vibrant communities in North Dakota and Minnesota. As a long-time champion for business, the Chamber will lead the charge on supporting this effort at the regional, state and national levels.

INCREASE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

1. **Enhance the region's business environment by facilitating opportunities for business leaders to influence legislative change.** **Innovate28** facilitates the regional connections and relationships with legislators needed to ensure meaningful exchange. Business and community leaders in Minnesota and North Dakota are engaged through regional policy discussions, Area Day at the Capitol and Regional Days on the Hill events, and participation in statewide coalitions.

EDUCATE ON THE ISSUES

2. **Equip legislators with crucial information on policy changes that foster competitive advantages and cultivate a thriving regional economy.** **Innovate28** facilitates critical discussions at the local, state and federal levels, makes a meaningful impact on community development and business climate issues, and recommends resources and strategic enhancements to pro-growth business programs in both ND and MN. These include the Automation Tax Credit, ND Career Builders, Operation Intern, Legacy Investment for Technology Loan Fund, Automate ND Grant, Bioscience Innovation Grant, Border Cities Enterprise Zones, Disparity Tax Credits. Additional areas of focus will be driven by strategic conversations with the business community over the 4-year plan period.

ENCOURAGE CIVIC PARTICIPATION

3. **Elevate civic engagement through voter education and candidate cultivation to increase representation of the business community in government.** **Innovate28** establishes a Center of Civic Engagement that provides robust voter education and ongoing cultivation of local candidates for office. Employer toolkits, legislative review and election guides, candidate events, and information on votefmwf.org work in concert to encourage civic engagement in the region.

Policy impacts our potential. We cannot afford to be complacent.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

Innovate28 promotes civic participation, leadership and collaboration that results in strong alignment across public and private sectors that achieves economic growth and sustainability.

Key Performance Measures:

- At least 28 of 38 local state legislators (ND & MN) are aligned in stance on all policies prioritized by the regional business community (Currently 24 of 38 local legislators are aligned on a majority of business priorities)

COMMITMENT TO DATA-DRIVEN COLLABORATION

Innovate28 ensures that the public policy issues identified by employers are addressed. The Chamber's statewide coalition building includes work with other Chambers of Commerce, Valley Prosperity Partnership, and military support task forces to strengthen event participation and build the region's credibility. The plan also includes a focus area on Military Affairs, working to reinstate the federal Air National Guard tuition assistance program, and the acquisition of more than one MQ-9 Block 5 aircraft for the 119th Wing Air National Guard. All of the plan's policy recommendations are driven by industry, academic and market research, and draw on all of the plan's data tools from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and Lightcast Developer to Census data and LaborForce software.

INNOVATE28 BUDGET

PILLARS OF WORK	BOLD	BOLDER
TALENT & WORKFORCE	\$2.92M	\$3.442M
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	\$1.446M	\$1.491M
PUBLIC POLICY	\$759.5K	\$809.5K
INVESTOR RELATIONS	\$125K	\$125K
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$5.25M	\$5.86M
4-YEAR TOTAL	\$21M	\$23.5M

Budget advancement allows for additional targeted marketing activations for talent attraction, brand amplification, and high-growth industry sector recruitment and expanded acclimation services.

PEER MARKET ANNUAL FUNDING

Sioux Falls Development Foundation & Greater Sioux Falls Chamber - **\$11.7 million combined**

Greater Des Moines Partnership - **\$8.5 million**

Greater Omaha Chamber & Greater Omaha Chamber Foundation - **\$6.8 Million combined**

Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (Milwaukee 7 Partnership) - **\$8 million**

Greater MSP, Minneapolis, MN - **\$6.8 million**

**Peer Market Annual Funding sourced from most recently published 990s and/or organization annual reports.*

4-YEAR REGIONAL IMPACT

The strategies of the Innovate28 plan address a wide range of opportunities for growth in our region over the next four years. It's strategies will result in new and expanded primary-sector businesses, job growth, and increased sales and tax revenue.



INNOVATE28 KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

TALENT AND WORKFORCE

Ignite a high-performing workforce ecosystem that attracts, engages, and retains top talent.

- More than 1,000 people placed in critical positions
- More than 100 companies use the plan's recruitment tools to support their attraction efforts
- More than 50 companies engage in the Company Culture Program
- Company support for 1,000 work-based learning opportunities for high school and college students
- 2,800 students/individuals referred to career-focused education and training with local partners
- 80% of new talent engaged in acclimation programming are retained in the region within 4 years
- 50% of new talent trailing spouse/partners and family members are employed within 3 months of relocation
- 10% decrease in recruitment and training costs for participating employers by 2028
- 100 responsive mentorship connections for in-demand industries and careers developed by 2028
- 25,000 individuals are engaged through relevant upskilling, networking, and training opportunities

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Secure a global reputation for retaining, growing, and attracting innovation-driven employers.

- 800+ existing company consults to support their growth (33%+ increase)
- Provide assistance on immediate company issues more than 400 times (25%+ increase)
- 10 certified sites available for development at all times throughout the plan period

PUBLIC POLICY



Achieve the most competitive regional business environment in the Midwest.

- 50 elected officials outside of the region's primary delegation engage with area stakeholders annually
- 2 regional community visits hosted annually including community leaders and legislators
- 100 or more business leaders engaging in state and federal 'Day at the Capitol' events annually (Currently 70)
- Over 200 companies engage in policy related roundtables and meetings annually (Currently estimated 180)
- \$52.42 million for Minnesota flood mitigation and \$770 million for North Dakota's Red River Valley Water Supply project secured
- 2,000 area businesses and 10,000 area employees receive legislative review guides and voting reports annually
- 40,000 views of candidate information on the VoteFMWF website on election years
- 10 new companies engage with candidate toolkits annually, promoting civic participation and directly increasing candidates for office
- An 85% success rate on bills advocated on in North Dakota and Minnesota is maintained

ORGANIZATIONAL ROLES MATRIX

The Power of Partnership!

The Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber and the Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation have clearly defined primary and supporting roles for strategy management and implementation. Each organization will also collaborate with partners in the region to ensure maximum impact.

	 THE CHAMBER <small>FARGO MOORHEAD WEST FARGO</small>	 FARGO MOORHEAD <small>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</small>
TALENT & WORKFORCE - Chamber Leads		
Attract workers through digital campaigns and branding	Supporting	Primary
Activate candidate interest by amplifying company cultures	Supporting	Primary
Facilitate Education and Industry Coordination	Primary	Supporting
Provide talent alignment, career pathways and hiring support	Primary	Supporting
Acclimate in-demand talent	Primary	Supporting
Retain talent through networking, training and leadership development	Primary	Supporting
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - GFMEDC Leads		
Retain and expand existing business	Supporting	Primary
Attract new business and investment	Supporting	Primary
Foster a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem	Supporting	Primary
Ensure Site Readiness and Availability	Supporting	Primary
PUBLIC POLICY - Chamber Leads		
Connect leaders with legislators	Primary	Supporting
Inform legislators by sharing data and outcomes of policy roundtables	Primary	Supporting
Ensure civic engagement via voter education and candidate cultivation	Primary	Supporting

THANK YOU

The Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation and the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce, together with their many members and partners, continue to provide award-winning services that are making a measurable impact on the community. **Innovate28** is our opportunity to amplify that success and make the FM region the most competitive in the Midwest.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of an investment in **Innovate28**.

Chamber Board Members

Chair, Tami Norgard, Vogel Law Firm

Chair Elect, Chad Flanagan, Eide Bailly LLP

Treasurer, Tiffany Lawrence, Sanford Health

Immediate Past Chair, Peter Stenehjelm, First International Bank & Trust

Member at Large, Kristi Huber, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota

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Mike Arntson, Cardinal IG

Kevin Bucholz, Moore Engineering, Inc.

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Camille Grade, Bushel

Kara Jorvig, Allegro Group

Paul Matthys, Cass County Electric Cooperative

Frank Matus, Thales

Jenny Olson, Microsoft

Jon Riewer, Eventide

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Julie Whitney, Bremer Bank

GFMEDC Board Members

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Vice-Chair, Don Campbell, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota

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Secretary, Jason Seger, Border States

Dr. Carrie Brimhall, M|State

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Terri Zimmerman, PacketDigital

Kevin Hanson, Gate City Bank

Rachel Lei, Aldevron

Matt Gilbertson, Moorhead City Council

Dr. Tim Mahoney, Fargo City Commission

Tony Grindberg, Cass County Commission

Bernie Dardis, West Fargo City Commission



An initiative of the
**Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber &
Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation**