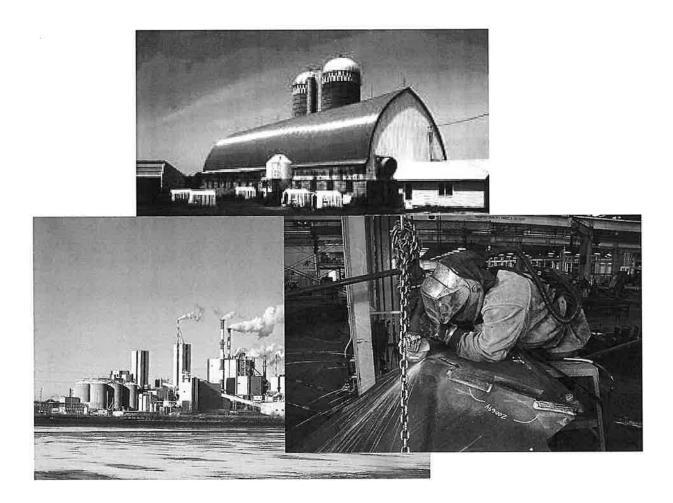
NORTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (NCWRPC) COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Performance Report

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The NCWRPC's ten county region is designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U. S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). Portage County is included in the data sections of the report; however, they do not actively participate in either the Economic Development District or the NCWRPC.

This document was prepared by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and was partially funded by the U. S. Economic Development Administration (EDA).

I. Introduction

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) is a voluntary association of governments, created in 1973 under Wisconsin State Statute 66.945, now 66.0309. Currently, the Commission serves the Counties of Adams, Forest, Juneau, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Vilas and Wood. This area received designation as an Economic Development District (EDD) in 1980 and has maintained that designation since.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Performance Report was discussed, reviewed, and adopted by the Full Commission of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC). The Full Commission serves as the committee to oversee this effort.

This Performance Report provides an update on the activities of the NCWRPC related to the 2017 CEDS, which was the last full update. In the near future the CEDS will be updated. As part of the update process a CEDS Committee will be organized to oversee the effort. The committee will include local elected officials, economic development groups, workforce groups and others. In addition, three area advisory organizations will provide review and input into the CEDS process as well. These are Centergy, which represents five counties in the central and southern area of the region, Grow North, which represents five northern counties in the region, and the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, which is the area workforce development agency.

II. Recent Activities

The following provides a brief listing of economic development activities conducted by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission since the last Performance Report. Assistance is provided at both the regional and local level:

Regional Activities:

Economic Development Planning: The CEDS will be revised annually and updated every five years, while in other years a Performance Report is prepared. The most current demographic and economic data available will be used with oversight provided by a CEDS Committee and or the Full Commission. The strategy becomes the foundation for all other economic development efforts of the NCWRPC.

Continue to partner with other regional organizations: Partners include all local and county economic development organizations, as well as the two regional marketing groups in the region (Centergy & Grow North) and the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, among others. There have also been recent discussions with the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point – the only four year institution in the region – to promote connections between

the university and community development. Maintain staff assistance to these economic development groups, and promote additional cooperation and cooperation within the region.

Promote Livable and Sustainable Development: Bring the principles of livability and sustainability into the planning discussion in the region. Also consider equity in all planning efforts.

Regional Data & Mapping Center: Maintain clearinghouse of data by continuing to assemble and array various data relating to economic development, e.g. employment and unemployment statistics, population estimates, income levels, etc. Also maintain a regional mapping database.

Training and Education: Maintain staff expertise by attending EDA conferences, national and state level economic development and planning conferences, as well as workshops and other training opportunities.

Access to Capital: Work to secure financing for local businesses and work with local communities to secure funding for projects. NCWRPC will work with area business to secure funding through the North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation (NCWDC), the Central Wisconsin Economic Development (CWED) Corporation, and others. The NCWRPC will also provide oversight to the NCWDC.

Regional Assistance Summary:

- Prepared the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Performance Report.
- Prepared a successful WEDC allocation application, through the Regional Disaster Recovery Program, to assist businesses damaged from storms recover.
- Updated County Profiles graphically display economic data, including and inventory of business and industrial parks.
- Assemble and arrange various data relating to economic development, e.g., employment and unemployment statistics, sales tax receipts, population estimates, income levels, etc.
- Prepared Quarterly Economic Development Reports for each county and the region.
- Maintain Census Data, Socioeconomic Information and Planning Library. Provide special Census data and EMSI reports on request.
- Continued to provide staff support to the Northwoods Rail Commission to maintain and expand freight rail options for area businesses in northern Wisconsin.

- North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation (NCWDC) assistance. This organization manages a revolving loan fund. These "gap" funds assist local businesses expand and create jobs throughout the region. Many of these businesses are located in EDA funded business parks.
- Provided various support to other economic organizations and efforts in the region.

Local Activities:

Local Assistance: Provide direct assistance to local units of government, businesses and other groups involved in economic development. Assistance is made available through providing data, developing plans, preparing grant applications, or providing staff assistance. Also provide assistance to updates of local comprehensive plans, in particular the economic development sections.

Maintain detailed Economic Development Profiles for each county in the region. Economic data would be collected and analyzed, maps prepared, and economic development profiles would be designed. These would be prepared in both print and digital format, and used to market the area to prospective businesses.

Foster Communication and Coordination: Promote the recommendations of the CEDS, maintain liaisons with federal, state, regional and local government agencies, disseminate current information about economic development and financial assistance programs and coordinate and evaluate economic development efforts in the region. Attended various committees and organizations throughout the region fosters these objectives.

Staff will continue to work with various organizations throughout the region, such as Workforce Development, Wisconsin Economic Development Association (WEDA), Centergy, Grow North, Member County Economic Development Corporations, and the Wausau Business Incubator Board, among others.

Support Local Efforts: Support the efforts of and collaborate with Workforce Development Boards, Technical Colleges, Colleges and Universities, and Regional Economic Development Organizations.

Support Infrastructure Efforts: Support businesses and communities applying for funding for new and improved infrastructure, as well as technology upgrades, such as broad band.

Work to incorporate economic development principles and implement CEDS strategy into local plans, particularly economic development chapters of comprehensive plans.

Local Planning Assistance: Continue to assist local communities in developing and updating Comprehensive Plans. Assist local comprehensive planning efforts develop economic development sections in their plans that relate and are compatible with the CEDS. Also assist in the development of detail economic plans, such as downtown plans, redevelopment strategies, and financial plans.

Grant Application Assistance: Continue to assist area businesses, local governments and development corporations in preparing state and federal economic development matching grant applications for local projects. Prepare Economic Development Administration (EDA), Wisconsin Department of Administration, and USDA's Rural Development applications, among others for additional economic development funding for active district members and NCWRPC sponsored projects. As an example, assisted the City of Eagle River prepare an EDA application for a back-up power supply system. This was an opportunity zone project.

Local Assistance Summary:

- Provided general assistance to area economic development organizations at the county and local levels.
- Worked with Adams, Forest and Langlade Counties to develop county-wide hazard mitigation plans, as part of our resiliency efforts.
- Provide general assistance to communities related to economic development.
- In partnership with WEDC, provided EMSI reports as requested.
- Prepared EDA grant for the City of Eagle River for a back-up power supply. Grant was awarded in the fall of 2019.
- Provided assistance for various state and federal grant applications on behalf of local communities.
- Prepared economic development chapters as part of comprehensive planning efforts throughout the region, including county, city, village, and town plans, including Lincoln & Vilas Counties and the Towns of Pelican, Polar, Phelps,
- Village of Weston workforce housing study.
- Staff worked with various economic development and related organizations throughout the region.

In addition, staff provides EDA Grant Administration as required for the Partnership Planning Grant. This consists of completing the annual EDA planning grant application, preparing and submitting EDA reports (semi-annual and year-end), maintaining financial statements, preparing and submitting EDA fund requests, and other related tasks to maintain EDA compliance. This also includes attendance at EDA meetings and other tasks as required for the planning grant.

III. Regional Demographic & Economic Changes

The region's population in 2018 was 447,830, which was about 8 percent of the state's total population. Over the last eighteen years the population has slowly increased by 3.9%, meanwhile over the same period the state grew by nearly 9%. The largest county is Marathon with over 136,000 persons, while Forest County is the smallest with just under 9,200 persons.

Table 1: North Central Wisconsin Population 2000-2018					
County	Census 2000	Census 2010	Estimate 2018	2000-2018 Change	2000-2018 % Change
Adams	19,920	20,875	20,630	710	3.6%
Forest	10,024	9,304	9,195	-829	-8.3%
Juneau	24,316	26,664	27,232	2,916	12.0%
Langlade	20,740	19,977	20,086	-654	-3.2%
Lincoln	29,641	28,743	28,957	-684	-2.3%
Marathon	125,834	134,063	136,517	10,683	8.5%
Oneida	36,776	35,998	36,285	-491	-1.3%
Portage	67,182	70,019	71,680	4,498	6.7%
Vilas	21,033	21,430	21,798	765	3.6%
Wood	75,555	74,749	75,450	-105	-0.1%
Region	431,021	441,822	447,830	16,809	3.9%
Wisconsin	5,363,715	5,688,040	5,843,443	479,728	8.9%
Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010; WI DOA					

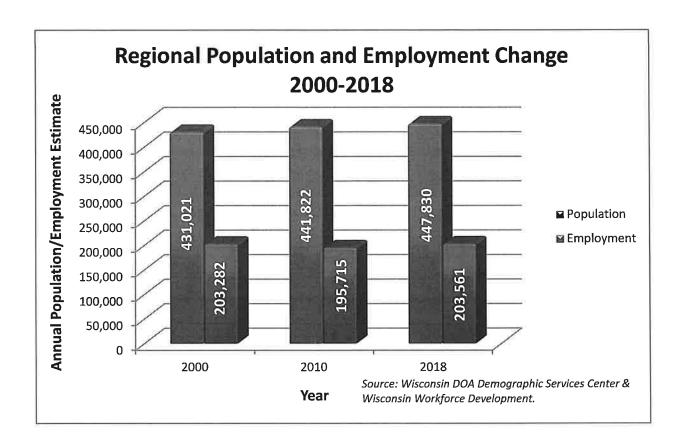
Employment numbers have rebounded since the recession. In 2018 there were 203,561 jobs in the ten-county region. Overall employment grew by 0.1% between 2000 and 2018. The state grew at a faster rate of 5%.

Table 2: North Central Wisconsin Employment 2000-2018					
County	Employment 2000	Employment 2010	Employment 2018	2000-2018 Change	2000-2018 % Change
Adams	3,788	4,605	4,417	629	16.6%
Forest	3,272	3,193	3,131	-141	-4.3%
Juneau	8,754	8,717	9,351	597	6.8%
Langlade	7,970	7,595	7,400	-570	-7.2%
Lincoln	12,051	10,225	11,090	-961	-8.0%
Marathon	66,447	64,558	71,322	4,875	7.3%
Oneida	17,764	16,109	16,428	-1,336	-7.5%
Portage	31,379	31,600	33,822	2,443	7.8%
Vilas	8,111	7,371	7,992	-119	-1.5%
Wood	43,746	41,742	38,608	-5,138	-11.7%
Region	203,282	195,715	203,561	279	0.1%
Wisconsin	2,737,382	2,630,246	2,874,378	136,996	5.0%
Source: WI DWD, QCEW					

In 2018, unemployment within the North Central Wisconsin Region was 3.2%, ranging from 2.7% in Marathon County to 4.8% in Forest County. Meanwhile, the region's Per Capita Income was \$46,324, ranging from \$53,712 in Vilas County to \$37,898 in Juneau County. Generally, the region's county incomes lag behind the state and nation.

Table 3: North Cent	ral Wisconsin Unemployment Rates	& Per Capita Incomes
County	Unemployment Rate, 2018	Per Capita Income, 2018
Adams	4.7%	\$38,736
Forest	4.8%	\$41,517
Juneau	3.1%	\$37,898
Langlade	4.0%	\$43,223
Lincoln	3.2%	\$45,766
Marathon	2.7%	\$50,111
Oneida	3.6%	\$51,715
Portage	3.0%	\$45,886
Vilas	3.9%	\$53,983
Wood	3.5%	\$46,743
Region	3.2%	\$46,324
Wisconsin	3.0%	\$53,712
United States	3.9%	\$50,756
Source: DWD 2019 (Not Seaso	nally Adjusted)	

The table below graphically displays both the population and employment changes in the region. Overall, both population and employment are increasing in the region.



In summary, the region's population continues to grow, but at a slower rate than the state and nation. However, that growth in concentrated in only some of the counties. Five of the ten counties experienced declines in overall population. Employment has grown in the region as well, but only four counties had an increase.

IV. Regional Economic Issues

Over the last year there were several economic issues that were identified within the region. These include:

- Regional economy lags behind national economic recovery
- Labor shortages in many fields, including manufacturing and technology
- Lack of broadband access in areas of the region, especially rural areas
- Workforce housing and affordability
- The Region is aging, which impacts future workforce size
- Continued lack of access to National Forest for timber production
- Decline of Paper Manufacturing industry and ripple effect in rail needs throughout the region, especially in the northern counties

V. Regional SWOT

As part of the previous CEDS Update a Regional Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats exercise was completed. It was reviewed as part of the Performance Report process.

Strengths

- Strong Manufacturing Base
- Access to quality Interstates
- Access to Regional airport
- Regional economic development effort and communication
- Innovative workforce
- Tourism
- Knowledgeable and hardworking workforce
- Competitive wages for businesses
- Lower Cost of Living
- Quality education system
- Technical, 2 year and 4 year college programs
- Access to natural resources
- Quality freshwater resources
- Quality of life/place
- Quality healthcare options
- Wealth of recreational activities
- Low state taxes for businesses
- Access to regional and municipal

Opportunities

- Industry specific 2 year training programs
- Innovative workforce
- Creative new uses for existing infrastructure, i.e. paper mills
- Emerging healthcare sector
- Better use of the Regional airport
- Access to Federal Lands timber
- Specialized manufacturing clusters
- Access to freshwater
- Natural resources and environment
- Entrepreneurial support
- Increasing number of incubators and seed accelerators
- Increase Regional collaboration
- Capitalization of educated, active retiree population
- Strong work ethic
- Municipal airports
- Amtrak stop

Weaknesses

- Limited broadband
- Roads limits for heavy transportation
- Unprepared future workforce
- Lack of skilled labor for specialties
- Lack of knowledge of manufacturing careers
- Distance to major markets
- Limited freight rail access in North
- High dependence on traditional manufacturing industries
- Waste disposal/ solid waste issues
- Declining young population
- Aquatic/ natural and terrestrial invasive species
- Lack of national forest access for timber cutting
- Lower wages for workers
- Availability of diverse affordable housing options
- Lack of public transit

Threats

- Slow population growth
- Shrinking workforce
- Unprepared workforce
- Low wages result in low quality workers
- Aging population
- Manufacturing dependency
- Paper manufacturing dependency
- Lack of diversity in industries
- Shortage of older woods supply
- Shrinking manufacturing workforce
- Aquatic and terrestrial invasive species
- Declining water quality
- Lack of creative industry clusters
- Decreasing population under 17 years of age
- · Aging/retiring workforce
- Growing healthcare costs
- Brain drain, threat of people not moving back after receiving education
- Funding for entrepreneurial, small, and midsize businesses

VI. Regional Economic Strategy

Economic development is pursued by many communities and organizations throughout the region with the overall goals of expanding the regional economy, increasing employment levels, and increasing tax base. Much of this work requires collaboration and partnerships with the various economic development organizations, state and federal agencies, local and county governments and the business community of the region. The goal of the CEDS is to provide a general framework for communities throughout the region as they work toward these goals.

To help accomplish this, the following strategy was developed during the preparation of the CEDS Update. It is reviewed annually as part of the CEDS Performance Report.

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Encourage business retention and expansion to maintain and increase employment opportunities in the Region.

Objectives:

- 1. Expand communication with existing businesses to identify opportunities and challenges.
- 2. Improve the Region's competitiveness by assessing and leveraging industry clusters.
- 3. Educate businesses on different grant and funding opportunities available.
- 4. Encourage and promote business education on exporting opportunities.

Goal 2: Create an innovative atmosphere to foster an entrepreneurially supportive environment.

Objectives:

- 1. Diversify the Region's economy by fostering the development of emerging industry sectors.
- 2. Identify, create and promote programs, activities, and policies fostering innovation and new business reducing the risk for entrepreneurs.
- 3. Identify and grow angel and venture capital investments.
- 4. Promote a culture of entrepreneurial and innovative business development.
- 5. Promote and encourage the development of new business incubators throughout the Region.
- 6. Develop the connection between the creative industries and economic development.
- 7. Identify and study "place-making" opportunities to improve public spaces.
- 8. Establish a link between educational institutions and business development.

9. Support start-up and small businesses with training, market research, financial assistance, strategic planning and other assistance.

Goal 3: Promote and attract new business to the Region.

Objectives:

- 1. Work with local governments, Regional partners and the state to assist with the attraction of new businesses to the area.
- 2. Recruit new businesses and industries that complement existing clusters, and place special emphasis on higher wage clusters.
- 3. Diversify the Region's economy fostering the development of emerging and evolving industry clusters.
- 4. Make prudent use of government incentives to enhance business development in the Region.

Goal 4: Encourage the reuse of existing commercial and industrial sites for more sustainable economic development.

Objectives:

- 1. Ensure that building and development codes and plans within the Region promote and facilitate the redevelopment of existing structures and infill development.
- 2. Continue to assess, remediate, and redevelop brownfield sites throughout the Region, taking full advantage of federal and state funding opportunities.
- 3. Work to increase the number of key, viable businesses and institutions in the downtown districts of our communities.
- 4. Maintain and enhance infrastructure and public facilities throughout the Region.

Goal 5: Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible workforce prepared to meet the needs of both existing and emerging industries and technologies.

Objectives:

- 1. Work with North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development to provide training to workers of all ages and economic strata to ensure they are current in existing and emerging skills, knowledge, ability and expectations.
- 2. Increase the number of 4-year high school completions in the Region.
- 3. Increase the number of associates and 4-year degrees in the Region.
- 4. Develop entrepreneurial training and education at area high schools, technical colleges, and universities.
- 5. Work with businesses, K-12 Schools, Higher Education (both 2 and 4 years programs) and Workforce Development to determine and develop skill sets.

- 6. Enhance business-specific leadership skills in young professionals
- 7. Develop a plan to retain and attract a young workforce.
- 8. Develop a mentor program for older workers to work with new workforce.
- 9. Develop a training program for retiring workforce to help develop a "second career".

Goal 6: Meet the full range of business' infrastructure needs with emphasis on transportation, utilities and communications.

Objectives:

- 1. Work with WISDOT to plan for, develop and maintain the capacity of the Region's transportation system.
- 2. Continue to support upgrades and repair of existing roadways.
- 3. Expand utility and transportation links to serve areas where they are needed for job growth.
- 4. Develop a reliable data infrastructure using both wireless and high speed fiber optic networks, especially in north sub Region.
- 5. Support efforts to maintain and expand freight rail in the Region.
- 6. Work with Central Wisconsin Airport and the Rhinelander /Oneida County Airport to expand cargo and passenger service in the Region.
- 7. Explore commuter and passenger rail service to the Region.

Goal 7: Promote and increase communication between Regional and county economic development, workforce development and other organizations.

Objectives:

- 1. Collaborate with local, county, economic development organization, surrounding regional planning commissions, state and federal agencies, as well as private business on economic development goals, objective and activities.
- 2. Create a unified vision of Regional growth and development needs for the Region.
- 3. Increase communication and collaboration at the Regional level about land use and transportation planning as it relates to economic development.
- 4. Coordinate economic development efforts among all entities to provide a seamless approach to maintain and diversify the Regional economy.
- 5. Establish and maintain partnerships to promote economic development for North Central Wisconsin.

VII. Regional Performance Indicators

In an effort to monitor change over time, these ten indicators have been established. These will be examined in the CEDS Update. These are listed in no particular order:

- 1. Total regional population, including age by cohorts
- 2. Total regional employment
- 3. Regional employment per sector
- 4. Regional unemployment
- 5. Total regional business establishments
- 6. Regional Location Quotient changes
- 7. Broadband access and reliability (area change)
- 8. Regional education levels for high school, associates, and bachelor's degrees
- 9. Acreage available for industrial/businesses development
- 10. Regional Per Capita & Median Household Income

VIII. NCWRPC Action Plan

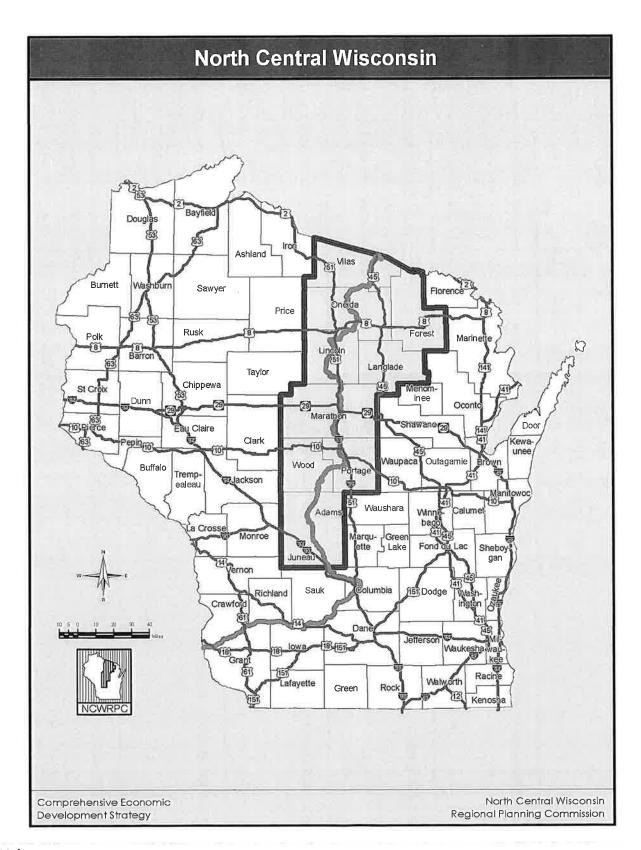
Below is the current Action Plan to guide the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. The following section provides a brief summary of tasks that the NCWRPC will undertake alone or in support of members, as resources permit, to support the overall goals of the CEDS:

Goal 1. Encourage business retention and expansion to mainta	in and increase employm
opportunities in the Region. Task	Timeframe
Prepare Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and annual performance reports.	Annually
Attend member County Economic Development Corporation's meetings to provide updates on CEDS and NCWRPC assistance.	Annually
Update comprehensive plan Economic Development Chapters to incorporate CEDS goals locally.	Ongoing
Provide Regional demographic information using EMSI and other data to complete economic analysis	Ongoing
Update County Economic Development Profiles.	Occasionally
Assist the North Central Wisconsin Development Corporation and work with other existing loans funds in the area to support local business development.	Ongoing
Provide assistance to members as needed. Explore WEDC, WHEDA, DOA, EDA and other grant opportunities to complete plans/projects.	Ongoing
Assist local development corporation staff, county ED committees, and regional economic development groups.	Ongoing
Encourage and assist preparation of county and local economic development strategies.	Ongoing

Promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses.	Ongoing
Encourage and assist start-up of firms in the Region.	Ongoing
Goal 2. Create an innovative atmosphere to foster an entreprene environment.	urially supportive
Task	Timeframe
Assist local communities prepare and update comprehensive plans and other related plans.	Ongoing
Assist preparing "downtown" and "place-making" plans as part of a Quality of Place/Life efforts.	Ongoing
Support area business incubators and prepare feasibility studies for new business incubators.	Ongoing
Goal 3: Promote and attract new business to the Region.	
Goal 3: Promote and attract new business to the Region. Task	Timeframe
Task Research and identify new business grant opportunities with DOA, WEDC, WHEDA, USDA, and EDA. Also explore the new federal Opportunity Zone program for application in	Timeframe Ongoing
Task Research and identify new business grant opportunities with DOA, WEDC, WHEDA, USDA, and EDA. Also explore the	
Task Research and identify new business grant opportunities with DOA, WEDC, WHEDA, USDA, and EDA. Also explore the new federal Opportunity Zone program for application in designated areas throughout the region. Maintain an inventory and map of business parks, including	Ongoing

Task	Timeframe	
Utilize GIS mapping to identify brownfields in the Region.	Ongoing	
Assist Brownfield planning efforts to assist communities.	Ongoing	
Continue to support the Wisconsin's Regional Planning Commission Brownfields program with the Wisconsin DNR.	Ongoing	
Pursue grant opportunities from federal agencies, such as EDA, EPA and USDA, and state programs.	Ongoing	
Goal 5: Ensure the future availability of a skilled and flexible the needs of both existing and emerging industries and techn		
	Timeframe	
Task	Timetrame	
Support the efforts of and collaborate with the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Technical Colleges, 2	Ongoing	
Support the efforts of and collaborate with the North Central	Hillion of all his state of the history of the	
Support the efforts of and collaborate with the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Technical Colleges, 2 and 4-year Colleges and Universities.	Ongoing	
Support the efforts of and collaborate with the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Technical Colleges, 2 and 4-year Colleges and Universities. Provide data related to employment characteristics and needs. Encourage educational institutions to develop training programs	Ongoing	
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Support the efforts of and collaborate with the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board, Technical Colleges, 2 and 4-year Colleges and Universities. Provide data related to employment characteristics and needs. Encourage educational institutions to develop training programs needed by the area's businesses. Encourage educational institution and job training centers to offer "second" career training options. Work with various organizations to create a plan to attract and	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	
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Promote telecommunications infrastructure and other technology development and expansion in the Region.	Ongoing
Work with CWA and Rhinelander/Oneida County Airport as needed.	Ongoing
Assist efforts of the Northwood Rail Commission.	Ongoing
Goal 7: Promote and increase communication between Region development, workforce development and other organization Task	
Attend local and county economic development corporation meetings to discuss EDA and NCWRPC assistance.	Ongoing
Attend regional economic group meetings, and related.	Ongoing



North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Annual Performance Report - 2020