

# REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2019-2024

WE RISE BY  
*lifting*  
EACH OTHER



**redriver**  
REGIONAL COUNCIL  
MOVING IDEAS TO ACTIONS



## Table of Contents

RRRC CEDS.....	6
• Summary Background .....	6
• SWOT Analysis.....	6
• Strategic Direction and Action Plan .....	6
• Evaluation Framework .....	6
Summary Background .....	7
CEDS Committee .....	8
Regional Partners .....	8
North Valley Career and Technology Center (NVCTC) / Regional School Districts .....	8
Northeast Manufacturing Group .....	8
Rendezvous Region Tourism Council (RRTC) .....	9
ND Small Business Development Center .....	9
Nelson, Pembina and Walsh County Job Development Authorities and Grand Forks Region EDC.....	9
Praxis Strategy Group .....	9
Others .....	9
Economic Condition .....	10
Part One: The Demographic Highlights.....	10
Population.....	10
Population Trends.....	11
Age Concentration .....	12
Population Reset? Growth in Millennials and Babies.....	13
Educational Attainment .....	14
Child Poverty .....	15
Part Two: The Economic Highlights .....	16
Job Trends .....	16
Largest Industries in Rural Counties .....	16
Gross Regional Product.....	18
Top Industry Earnings .....	19
Manufacturing Highlight .....	20
Economic Clusters.....	21



Median Household Income.....	24
Job Shifting in Grand Forks Metropolitan Statistical Area.....	25
Regionalization.....	26
Migration Trends to Grand Forks County .....	27
The Changed Agricultural Dynamic.....	28
Part Three: Infrastructure Overview .....	31
Highway System .....	31
Bridges and Paved and Gravel Roads.....	32
Railroad .....	34
Natural Gas .....	34
Rural Water Systems.....	35
Internet Service.....	36
Electricity.....	37
Part Four: Recreational and Cultural Assets .....	38
Outdoor Recreation .....	38
Cultural History .....	38
Part Five: Educational Resources and Workforce Development and Other Assets.....	39
Regional Assets .....	40
Three Strategic Initiatives .....	41
1.    Rendezvous Region Tourism Council. ....	41
2.    Northeast Manufacturing Group. ....	41
3.    21st Century Workforce Development.....	41
SWOT Analysis.....	42
Strengths: .....	43
Weaknesses.....	43
Opportunities .....	43
Threats .....	43
Issues.....	44
Tensions .....	44
Advice.....	44
How would we define success?.....	44



Questions: .....	44
Ideas: .....	44
Why did you come today? .....	45
Take aways: .....	45
A Cultural Shift .....	45
Ten Skills for Strategic Doing .....	47
Action Plan .....	48
CEDS Goal #1:    Support New and Existing Businesses.....	48
Align businesses and communities with access to capital.....	48
Continue to develop the Northeast Manufacturing Group .....	48
Continue leading the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship Initiative.....	48
Support the continued development of Grand Sky and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) industry development in northeastern North Dakota .....	48
CEDS Goal #2:    Support Vibrant Community Development .....	49
Initiate placemaking activities such as downtown, public place enhancements, streetscaping, trails, beautification, recreational amenities, and programming.....	49
Provide technical support to strengthen community assets including infrastructure, housing, healthcare, childcare, planning and leadership .....	49
Consider the development or establishing a partnership of an existing entity for a regional community foundation to cultivate private public partnerships on community enhancement projects .....	49
CEDS Goal #3:    Support Visitor and Destination Development.....	50
Continue the development of the Rendezvous Region Tourism Council. ....	50
Continue to support the redevelopment and expansion of regional outdoor recreation and cultural amenities.....	50
Support development and marketing amenities, niche businesses and activities which develop the region into a unique and interesting destination and providing experiences.....	50
CEDS Goal #4:    Foster Regionalism .....	51
Convene regional discussions and/or events with community leaders to provide education, networking, and comradery within northeastern North Dakota .....	51
Continue to provide positive public messaging of events, projects, and development goals throughout the region.....	51
Cultivate regional partnerships on project development and investment as well as between the City of Grand Forks and the remainder of the region. ....	51



Continue to support local development organizations such as the Nelson and Pembina County Job Development Authorities and others and implementation of their strategic plans. ....	51
CEDS GOAL #5: Disaster Resiliency.....	52
Maintain strong knowledge of FEMA and related disaster mitigation and recovery funding programs. ....	52
Encourage and support disaster mitigation planning in cooperation with county emergency management offices. ....	52
Evaluation Framework .....	53
Economic Resilience.....	54
APPENDIX.....	56
CEDS Committee .....	56
Board of Directors.....	57
Staff.....	57
Northern Valley Youth Entrepreneurship Summary.....	58



## RRRC CEDS

The RRRC is one of eight regional councils and Economic Development Districts (EDDs) as designated by the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. The RRRC has been a funded EDD since 1994 which includes the requirement of developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every five years for the four counties of northeastern North Dakota. This CEDS covers the period of July 2019 through June 2024.

This CEDS document is a culmination of several months of demographic and economic research, two large CEDS committee meetings held in spring 2019, and several one-on-one or small group discussions with targeted partners, as well as the staff and Board of Director's ongoing knowledge of the needs and opportunities throughout the region. The CEDS is required to seek EDA assistance within the region but more importantly, the CEDS provides a platform for regional engagement, important discussions about the future, and collaboration on creating a strategic direction and action plan.

The following sections provide a framework for the Red River CEDS:

- **Summary Background** highlights the economic conditions of the region.
- **SWOT Analysis** explores regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- **Strategic Direction and Action Plan** outlines a regional strategy to enhance community vitality and resiliency; grow and diversify the economy; and foster a regional approach to economic development.
- **Evaluation Framework** identifies performance measures used to evaluate the implementation of the CEDS and its impact in the region.



## Summary Background

The Red River Regional Council (RRRC) serves the four counties in northeastern North Dakota including Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina and Walsh Counties. The region was established in 1973 and celebrated its 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary last year.

The RRRC is governed by a Board of Directors including mayors, county commissioners, soil conservation district representatives, and a handful of additional members representing the Local Development Corporations, City of Grand Forks, Job Service North Dakota and The Chamber of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. Additionally, the Board has three advisory members. Today, there are 15 directors with a full listing found in Appendix A. The Board of Directors meets on a bi-monthly basis with the Executive Committee meeting as needed on the alternate months. The current staff includes four full time and two part time employees.





## CEDS Committee

The CEDS Committee for this planning process of the RRRC Board of Directors as well as partners from a variety of organizations serving northeastern North Dakota including local development corporations, cities, counties, ND Center for Rural Health, UND Center for Innovation, Job Service North Dakota, Grand Forks Region EDC, The Chamber of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, Grand Forks Young Professionals, Grand Forks Region Community Foundation, ND Legislature, banking, manufacturing, retail, and education. A complete list of the CEDS Committee members are listed in the Appendix.



*Partial CEDS Committee Members - Front Row: Uma Hoffman, Cheryl Osowski, Mayor Lacey Hinkle, Bernie Kringstad, Mayor Gerald Uglem, Jacob Suda, Lori Estad. Back Row: Maggie Suda, Mary Houdek, Brandon Baumbach, Michael Helt, Chris Lipsh (Chair), Nick Ziegelmann, Mark Schill, Sen. Janne Myrdal, Dawn Mandt*

## Regional Partners

### North Valley Career and Technology Center (NVCTC) / Regional School Districts

During the previous CEDS process, workforce development and continued population loss became key issues to be addressed. Over the past six years, the RRRC has developed a strong partnership with the NVCTC and regional school districts (in each of the four counties) with its youth entrepreneurship and workforce development initiatives that engage more than 1,500 3<sup>rd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students per year through a series of educational and exposure events. This initiative was retitled as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workforce Development in 2019.

### Northeast Manufacturing Group

This group was formed a few years ago by the RRRC to bring together the 20+ manufacturing and food processing companies within Walsh and Pembina Counties to address issues (primarily workforce





development), special topic education, legislative advocacy, and to find commonalities. This group is organized by the RRRC in partnership with the Pembina County JDA and meets on a quarterly basis.

### Rendezvous Region Tourism Council (RRTC)

The RRTC was re-established in 2017 to resurrect and continue the fine work of volunteers and leaders over the previous 25 years. The RRTC's mission is to market, educate, and continue amenity development which enhance quality of place and encourage visitors to explore the Rendezvous Region which includes Cavalier, Pembina and Walsh Counties. The RRRC, in partnership with the Pembina County JDA, leads the organization of this group which has a 15-member Board of Directors and intern that meet on a monthly basis. In the past six months, the RRTC has gained 100+ members and has an annual goal of \$60,000 operating and marketing budget.

### ND Small Business Development Center

The SBDC program provides free business consulting services as supported by the Small Business Administration, ND Department of Commerce, and others. The RRRC routinely refers emerging or expanding business clients to the SBDC program for initial consulting, business plan and financial projection development. Staff for the SBDC is located at the UND Center for Innovation in Grand Forks and travels throughout the region.

### Nelson, Pembina and Walsh County Job Development Authorities and Grand Forks Region EDC

The county-level economic development groups as well as the GFREDC are strong, regular partners with the RRRC. The RRRC provides development and management services to Nelson and Pembina County JDAs. These partnerships include common initiatives, project funding development, and other networking to support growth and development in the region.

### Praxis Strategy Group

Praxis is a private economic development consulting group headquartered in Grand Forks. The RRRC has partnered with Praxis on a couple of planning projects as well as hired Praxis to assist with other projects including the CEDS. Praxis has a national presence and offers expanded insights on shifts in development priorities, strategies, and economic and demographic trends.

### Others

In addition, there are numerous other partners the RRRC routinely works with to further the mission of the CEDS including: ND Department of Commerce, Bank of ND, ND Division of Emergency Services, ND Housing Finance Agency, ND Department of Health and Public Finance Agency, ND Industrial Commission, ND Parks and Recreation Department, USDA Rural Development, Federal Emergency Management Agency, US Department of Homeland Security, EDA, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, ND Association of RECs, ND Association of Counties, ND League of Cities, Economic Development Association of ND, Impact Dakota, Chambers of Commerce, Greater ND Chamber, ND Association of Regional Councils, Governor and congressional delegation offices, and more.



## Economic Condition

Praxis Strategy Group helped with a thorough understanding of the demographic trends and economic condition in northeastern North Dakota and presented these findings to the CEDS Committee on February 21, 2019. With portions of the analysis,

Nelson, Walsh, and Pembina Counties were segregated from Grand Forks County as to not be swayed statistically by the City of Grand Forks vs. the rural areas of the region. The following are highlights of this research.

### Part One: The Demographic Highlights

The following are highlights of the demographic analysis in the region. These topics are covered more in depth in the following sections.

- Population declining in rural counties and still relatively old
- BUT...emerging group of people in 30s. What happens next?
- Low in bachelor's degrees in rural areas
- Strong in two-year degrees
- Young people well-educated
- Child poverty a key area to monitor



*Mark Schill, Praxis Strategy Group presenting data on economic condition*

### Population

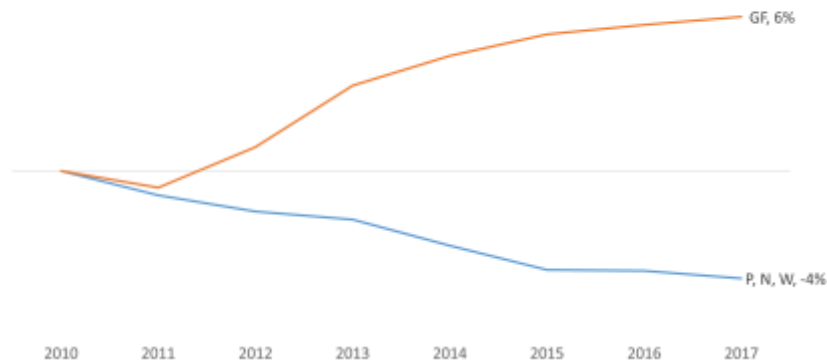
The rural areas of the region have had continued population loss since 1940 when the peak population of Nelson, Walsh and Pembina Counties was 45,547 and in 2017 it was 20,764 – a 54% drop. During the same period, Grand Forks County saw continued growth until 1990. Grand Forks County's population declined in the 2000 Census but rebounded by 2017 to a total population of 70,795.

The rural counties in the region have struggled with [outmigration and population loss](#) for 80 years – much attributed to decades of growing efficiencies of the farm industry. At the same time, Grand Forks County has continued to grow. The downward trend appears to be beginning to level off in the rural counties. While the region has developed a diversified economic base, it has not been enough to stop outmigration

Alongside population loss has been a developing issue of [lack of adequate workforce](#) to fill existing openings across the region. In a recent business retention and expansion interviews, lack of adequate workforce was cited as the top barrier to business growth.

The following chart shows population shifts in all four counties since 2010. Grand Forks County has grown 6% while the three rural counties lost 4% of its people.

## Population Growth in Northeast North Dakota Counties



## Population Trends

The following are a series of trends related to millennials, retiring soon, racial diversity, veterans, violent crime and property crime. Again, these trends have been divided by the rural counties and Grand Forks County which includes notable differences. The rural counties have a lower rate of millennials and a higher rate of retiring soon people compared to Grand Forks County. Grand Forks County is home to the University of North Dakota (includes undergraduate, graduate and doctorate programs with total enrollment of approximately 13,500 students) and East Grand Forks includes a two-year higher education campus with Northland Technical College (enrollment of nearly 5,000 students) which influences the higher concentration of the millennial population. Both areas have a lower racial diversity than the national average for comparable sized areas as well as violent crime. Both areas have higher veteran populations and Grand Forks County has a higher property crime rate than the comparable average and the rural counties have less.

### Nelson, Pembina, Walsh Counties



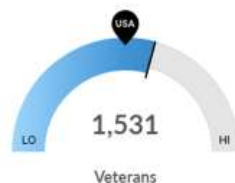
Your area has 3,255 millennials (ages 20-34). The national average for an area this size is 4,301.



Retirement risk is high in your area. The national average for an area this size is 5,919 people 55 or older, while there are 8,054 here.



Racial diversity is low in your area. The national average for an area this size is 8,155 racially diverse people, while there are 2,643 here.



Your area has 1,531 veterans. The national average for an area this size is 1,207.



Your area has 1.73 violent crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 3.75 per 1,000 people.



Your area has 15.84 property crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 24.21 per 1,000 people.

## Grand Forks County



Millennials

Grand Forks County, ND has 22,697 millennials (ages 20-34). The national average for an area this size is 14,661.



Retiring Soon

Retirement risk is low in Grand Forks County, ND. The national average for an area this size is 20,179 people 55 or older, while there are 16,397 here.



Racial Diversity

Racial diversity is low in Grand Forks County, ND. The national average for an area this size is 27,799 racially diverse people, while there are 11,474 here.



Veterans

Grand Forks County, ND has 4,608 veterans. The national average for an area this size is 4,116.



Violent Crime

Grand Forks County, ND has 2.79 violent crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 3.75 per 1,000 people.



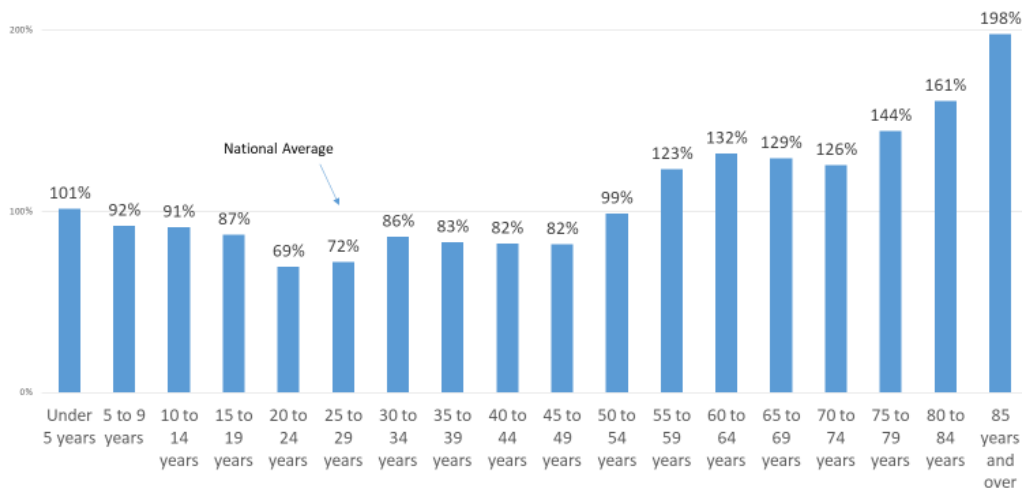
Property Crime

Grand Forks County, ND has 26.96 property crimes per 1,000 people. The national rate is 24.21 per 1,000 people.

## Age Concentration

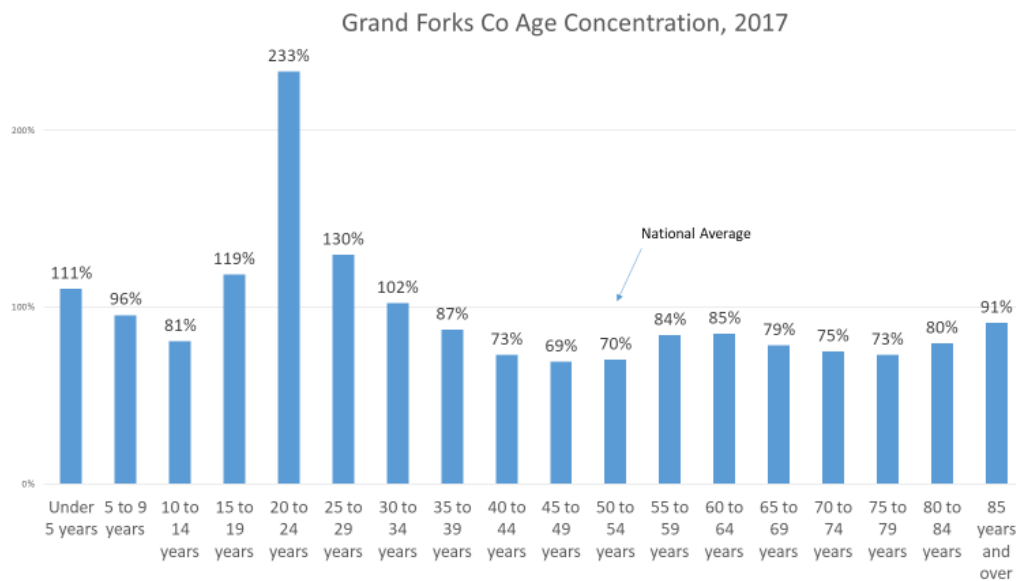
The following charts summarize the age concentration relative to national average in the rural counties and Grand Forks County in 2017. In the rural counties are below the national average for ages 5 through 54. The 20 to 29-year old age group deviates most, with a concentration just 69% of national average. Notably, the senior population is significantly above the national average starting at age 60 and beyond as 123% to nearly 200% of the national average.

Nelson, Pembina, Walsh Co Age Concentration, 2017



The age dynamics are different in Grand Forks County with the large category at 233% of the national average are the 20 to 24-year olds. Again, this speaks to the presence of two institutions of higher

education in Grand Forks and East Grand Forks. Nearly all the ages ranging from 0 to 34 are above the national average while the 35+ categories are less than the national average.



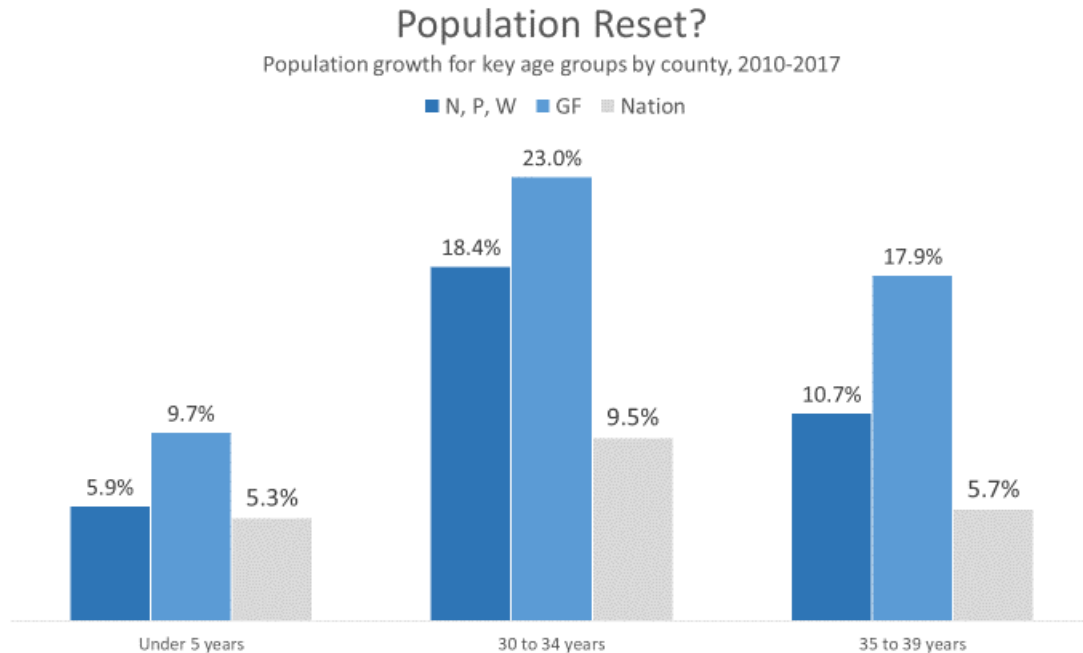
## Population Reset? Growth in Millennials and Babies

The interesting plot twist for our rural counties is the growth in the young children under age five as well as those in the family and childbearing ages of 30 to 39. These categories exceed the national average in both the rural counties as well as Grand Forks County. This may speak to the appeal of rural living or a return to roots following the college education or post-high school exodus when reaching their childbearing era. Today, millennials are the single-largest age group in the United States. There have been numerous articles written on the millennial attraction to small towns and rural areas. Interestingly, northeastern North Dakota may be seeing the benefit of this trend. As such, communities focused on building family friendly amenities, broadband services and providing basic services and infrastructure including quality medical and education services may attract more of this age bracket and capture this revitalization opportunity.

Older millennials (ages 25 to 34) are focusing on home values across the country. While this age group amounts to 13.6% of the population, this group is closing 30% of the home buyers (according to Realtor.com). Ellie Mae, a national mortgage data firm, has a Millennial Tracker to highlight these trends. There are two North Dakota communities that have made the top eleven list of communities millennials are moving to – Dickinson and Williston. Both cities are highly impacted by the energy boom in ND as well as likely contributing to North Dakota quickly becoming one of the youngest states in the United States. As reported by KXNET in July 2019, North Dakota is the only state in the country growing younger over the past decade and is currently the 4<sup>th</sup> youngest state – which is a shift from 20 years ago having been the 35<sup>th</sup> youngest state. North Dakota provides a high quality of work/life balance. Located outside the oil patch, Grand Forks and Sioux Counties are currently the youngest counties in the state.

These trends do not portray that millennials are flocking to rural areas, but it does indicate a willingness to do so. In northeastern North Dakota, much of this trend could be attributed to proximity to family,

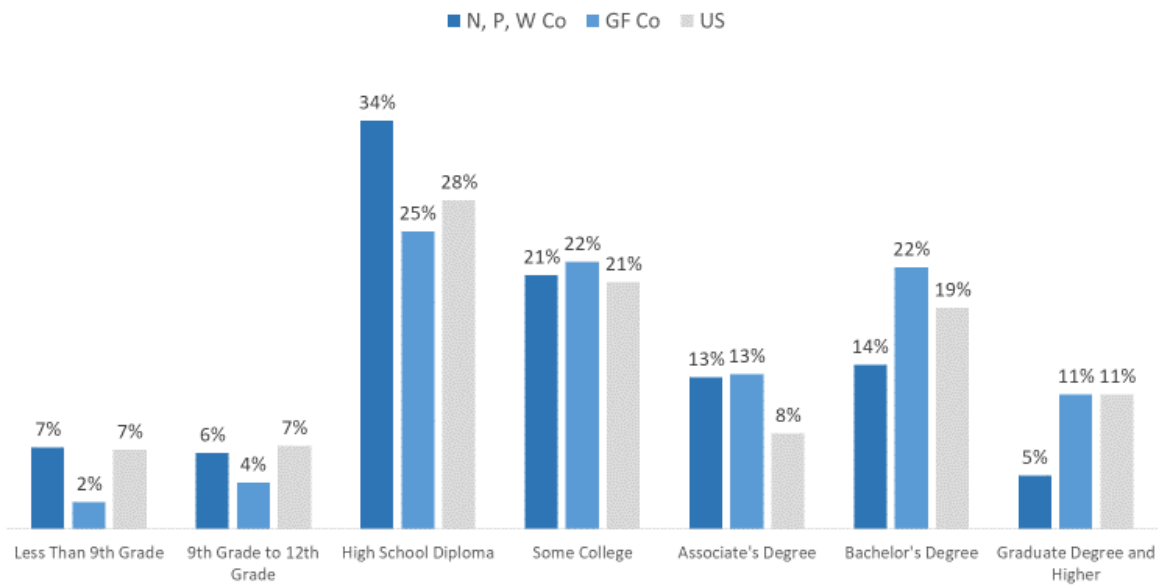
affordability, employment opportunities and specific attraction efforts – particularly for professionals such as teachers, doctors and others.



## Educational Attainment

The rural counties have a higher share of residents with a high school level of education (34%) than Grand Forks County (25%) as well as United States (28%). All counties rank at the national average for some college and higher than the national average for two-year degrees (13% vs. 8%). The rural counties include 14% of the population with a bachelor's degree while Grand Forks County is at 22% and the national average is 19%. Grand Forks County meets the national average of 11% in graduate degrees while the rural counties are at 5%. Grand Forks County exceeds both the state and national rate for two- and four-year degrees. Northeastern North Dakota is well-educated.

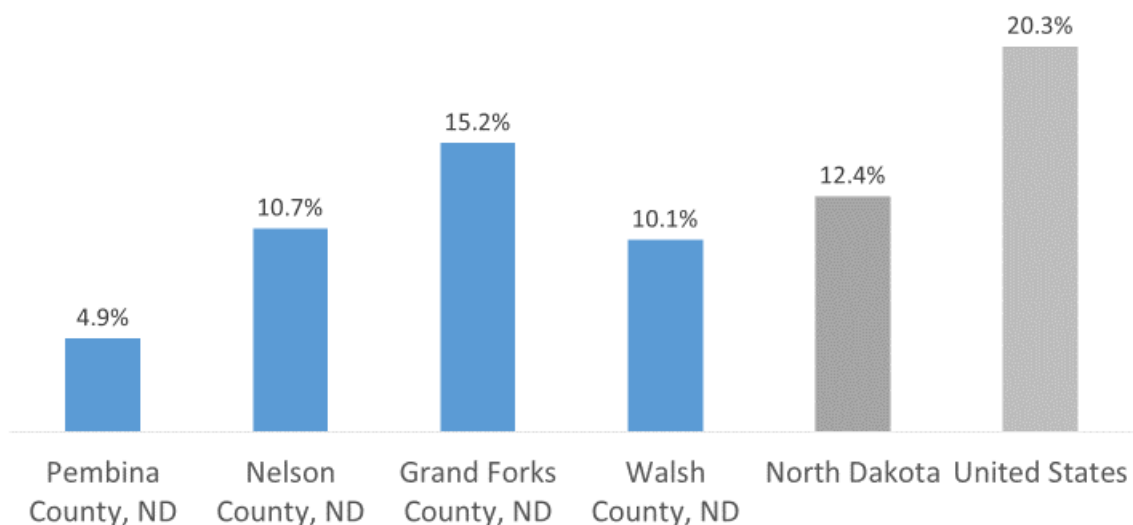
## Educational Attainment , 2017



### Child Poverty

The national child poverty rate in 2017 was 20.3% and 12.4% in North Dakota. Our counties ranged from 4.9% in Pembina County to 15.2% in Grand Forks County. Grafton Public Schools (located in Walsh County) repeatedly raises the issue of low income within the district. Currently 45% of the elementary students qualify for free or reduced lunch while the statewide average is 30%.

## Child Poverty Rate, 2017





## Part Two: The Economic Highlights

The following are the economic highlights which are further described in the following sections.

- Slow decline in rural counties – economic shock in Grand Forks County
- Dominated by agriculture, manufacturing, government, distribution – particularly in rural
- Big gap in professional services and finance
- Room to grow in tourism and hospitality in rural counties
- Good jobs growing in urban center
- Median income is rising

### Job Trends

The rural counties have seen a decline in total jobs over the past five years by 11% going from 15,314 to 13,630 jobs – significantly short of the national growth rate. This decline is forecasted to continue through 2023.

#### Job Trends Nelson, Pembina, Walsh Co

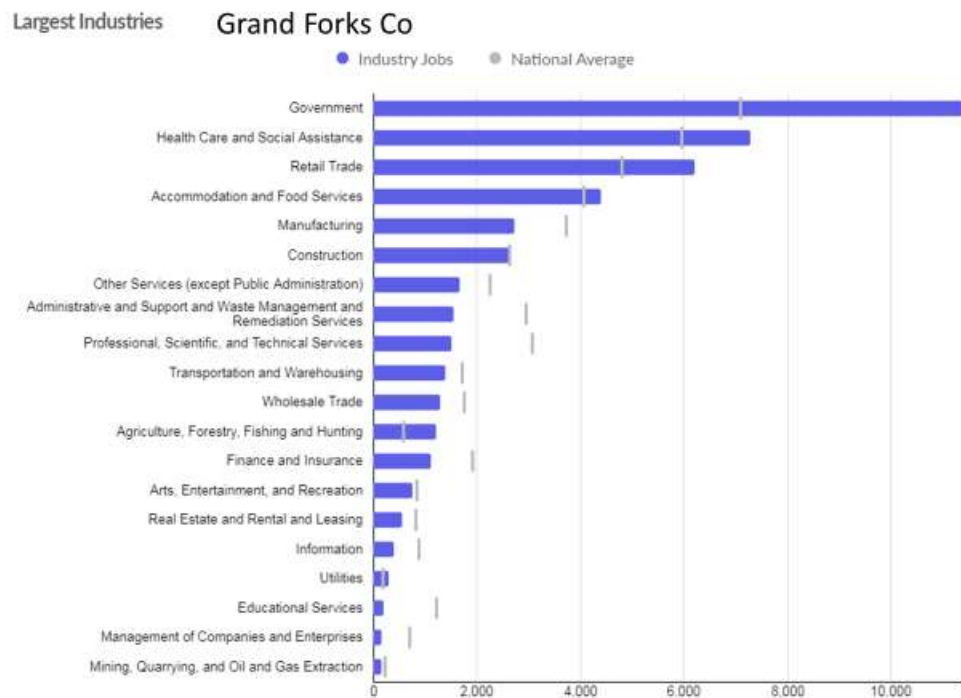
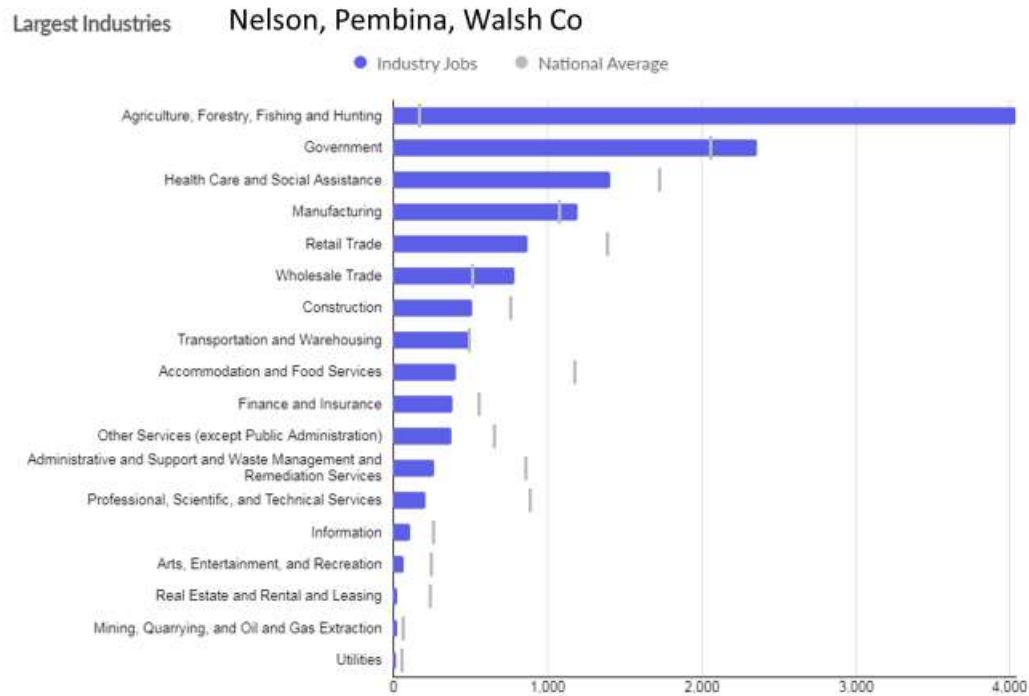
From 2013 to 2018, jobs declined by 11.0% in 3 North Dakota Counties from 15,314 to 13,630. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 7.8% by 18.8%.



### Largest Industries in Rural Counties

The five largest industries (including estimates of full-time self-employed workers) in the three rural counties include: agriculture, government, healthcare, manufacturing and retail trade. While farms have steadily become more efficient for decades, agriculture still provides the most jobs in our rural counties. Agriculture has more than 4,000 jobs while government exceeds 2,000. Agriculture far exceeds the national average of between 100 to 200 jobs. These rural counties are home to US Border Patrol, Cavalier Air Station, and the Life Skills and Transition Center as well as jobs in local and county governments and school systems which leads to exceeding the national average in this category. Healthcare has nearly 1,500 jobs, Manufacturing has more than 1,000 jobs, exceeding the national average. Top growing industries include professional,

scientific, and technical jobs as well as support and waste management services with 60+ jobs in each category.



The top five largest industries in Grand Forks County include government, healthcare, retail trade, accommodation/food services, and manufacturing. Each of these, with the exception of manufacturing, are

above the national average for similar sized areas. The number of government jobs in Grand Forks County far exceeds the national average largely due to the location of the Grand Forks Air Force Base, US Border and Customs, University of North Dakota as well as an array of regional locations for multiple state agencies as well as local and county governments.

## Gross Regional Product

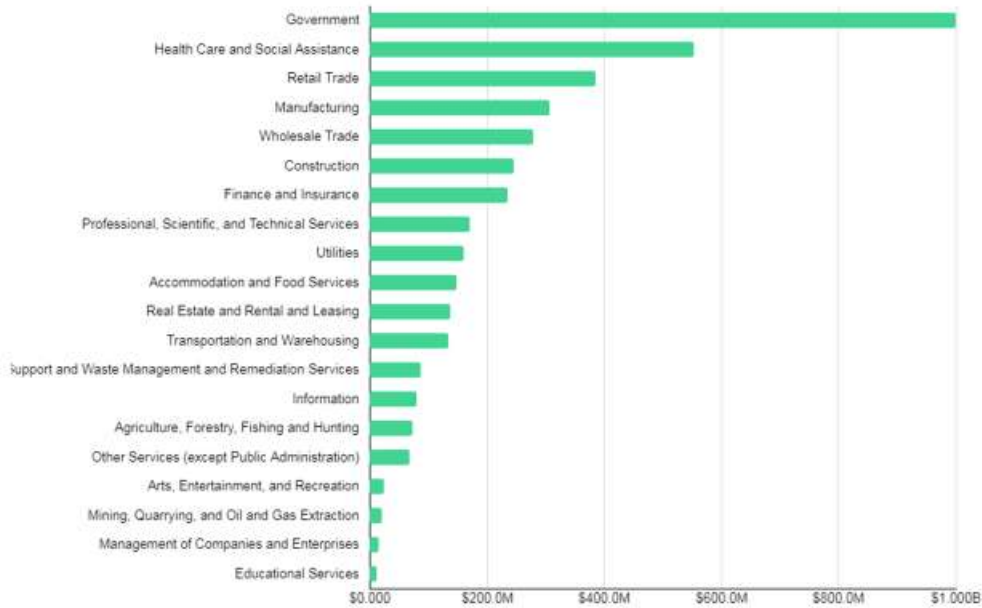
The top four industries for gross regional product (monetary measure of the market value of all final goods and services produced in the region) for the three rural counties include agriculture, government, wholesale trade and manufacturing. While ranked 12<sup>th</sup> for jobs in the rural counties, agriculture is by far the largest industry as it relates to value. The value of these top four industries amounted to approximately \$700 million in 2018. In Grand Forks County, the top four industries gross regional product include government, healthcare, retail trade, and manufacturing. The top three industries for jobs in Grand Forks County were also the top three industries for gross regional product.



## Top Industry GRP

## Grand Forks Co

● 2018 Gross Regional Product



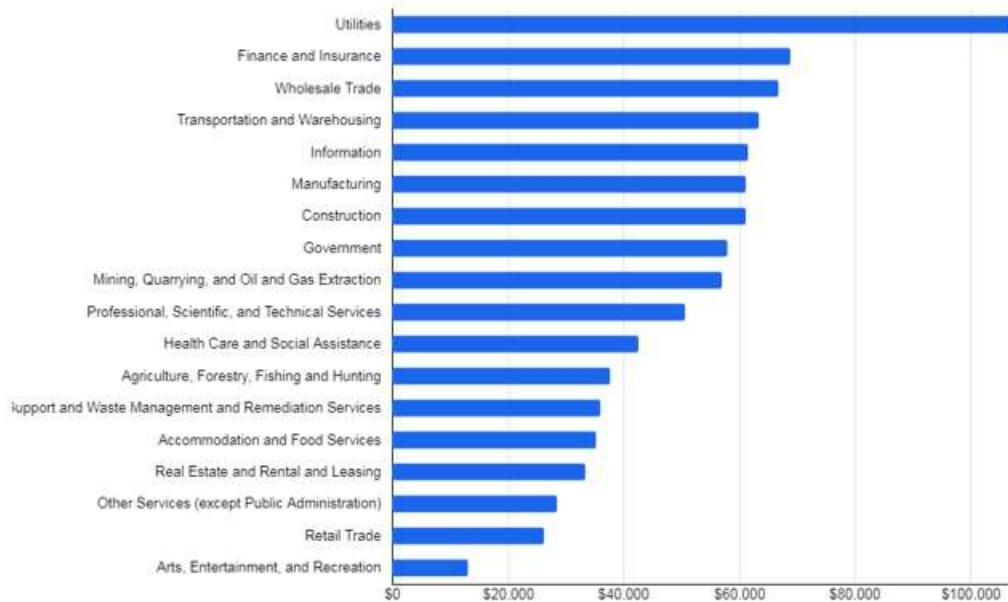
## Top Industry Earnings

While utilities was the smallest industry in the three rural counties as well as third from last in the gross regional product by industry, the earnings per worker are highest in this category followed by finance/insurance, wholesale trade, and transportation/warehousing. In Grand Forks County, the top earnings per worker were in utilities, finance/insurance, management and professional/scientific/technical services.

## Top Industry Earnings

## Nelson, Pembina, Walsh Co

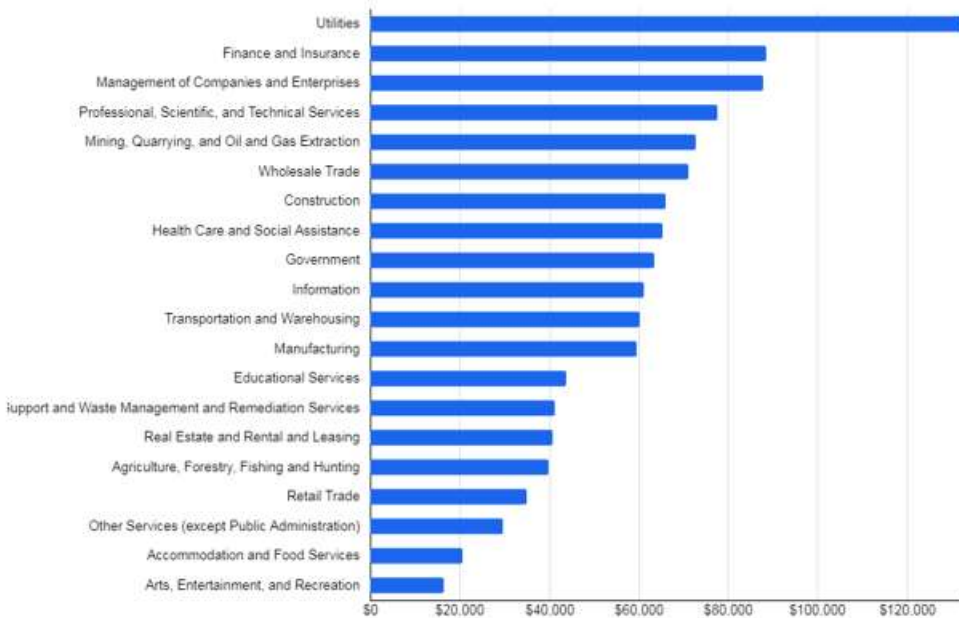
● 2018 Earnings Per Worker



## Top Industry Earnings

## Grand Forks Co

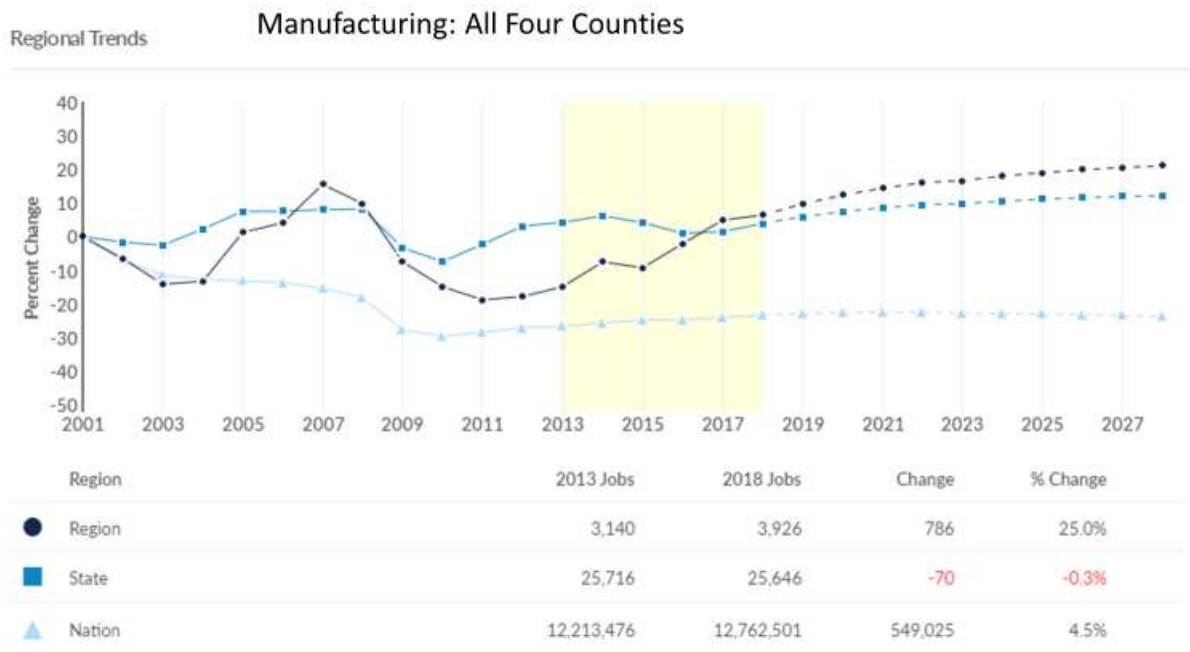
● 2018 Earnings Per Worker



## Manufacturing Highlight

The following graph includes manufacturing jobs within all counties in Region 4, state and national trends based on percentage change. Between 2013 and 2018, manufacturing jobs in Region 4 grew from 3,140 to 3,926 – a 25% increase while the state sustained a -0.3% decrease and the United States with 4.5% growth. The Region 4 trajectory for growth is forecasted to continue at a rate greater than the state and

nation through 2027.

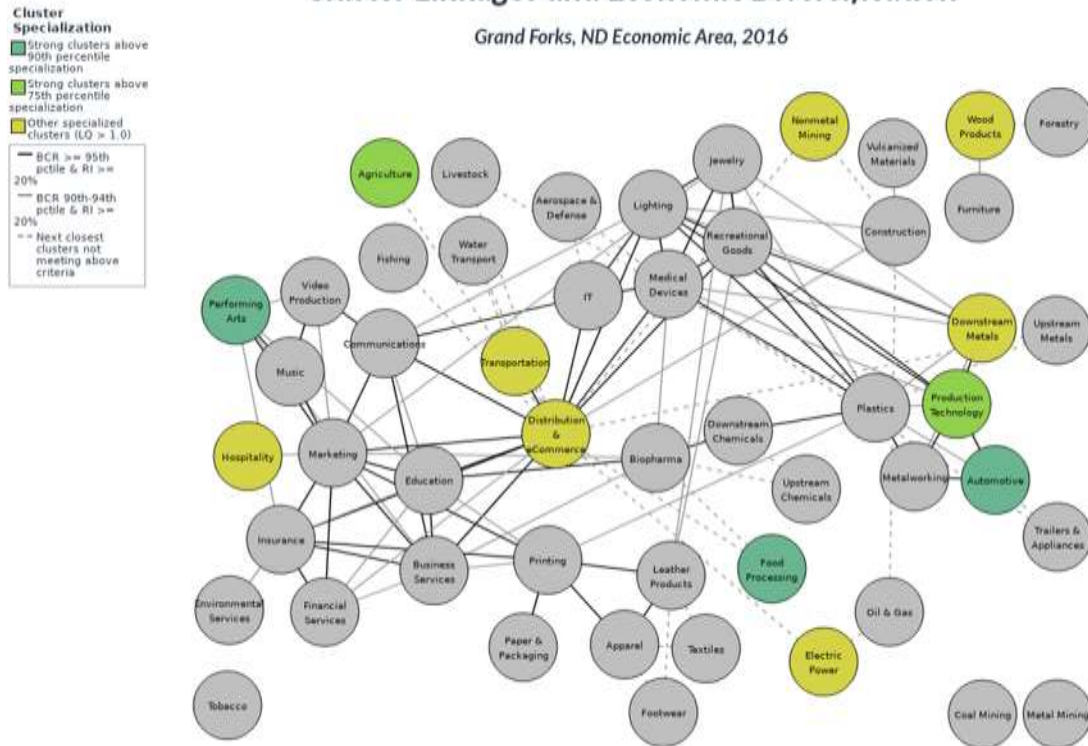


## Economic Clusters

There are several economic clusters that rank as strong (75 percentile and above) which has also been discussed in the preceding sections as well as highlighted by the graphic below. The strongest sectors include agriculture, automotive, food processing, performing arts, and production technology. Additional clusters having a location quotient of greater than 1.0 include nonmetal mining, wood products, downstream metals, transportation, distribution and e-commerce, electric power and hospitality.

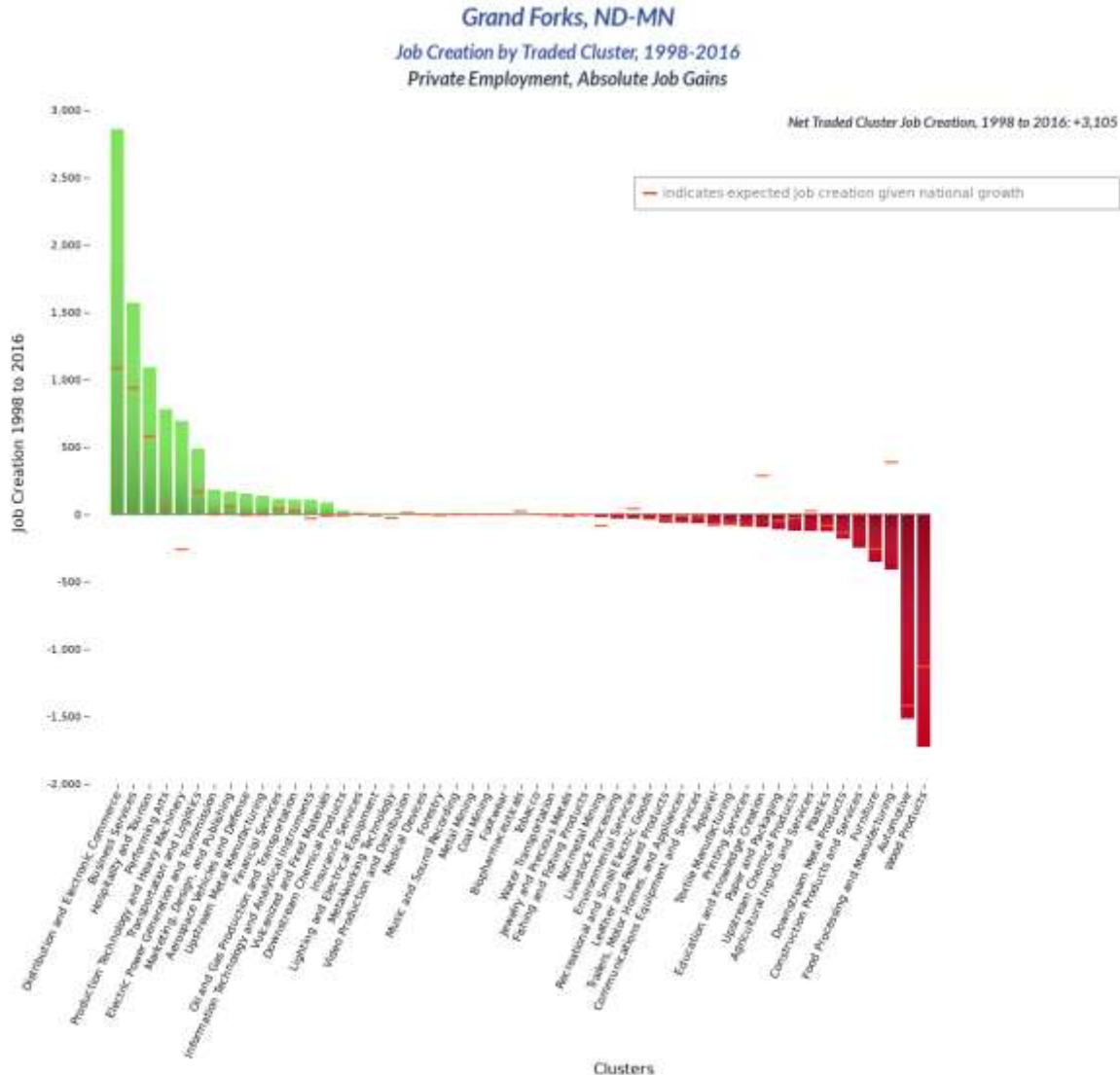
## Cluster Linkages and Economic Diversification

Grand Forks, ND Economic Area, 2016



The Grand Forks region experienced a net traded cluster job creation between 1998 and 2016 of +3,105 jobs. The five clusters with the most growth included distribution and electronic commerce, business services, hospitality and tourism, performing arts, and production technology and heavy machinery. The five clusters with the most losses included wood products, automotive, food processing and manufacturing, furniture, and construction products and services. More detail on gains and losses are provided in the graph below.





Source: [U.S. Cluster Mapping Project](#), Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness, Harvard Business School. [Data Sources](#)

And finally, [unique in North Dakota is the establishment of Grand Sky](#) through a mixed-use land partnership agreement with the Grand Forks Air Force Base and Grand Forks County. Grand Sky is a 217-acre UAS-specific business and aviation park – the first in the United States with a groundbreaking held in 2015. Grand Sky is estimated to create 3,000 jobs at full build out of the park. The State of ND has invested more than \$43 million in building this site as a national leader in this industry – called the “Silicon Valley for drones” by the ND Commerce Department. Northrup Grumman, a global security company, built a 36,000 sq ft facility at Grand Sky to become a research and development; pilot, operator and maintainer training; operations and mission analysis; and aircraft maintenance. Northrop Grumman makes the Global Hawk, a large UAS that is also flown by the military at Grand Forks Air Force Base. In 2015, General

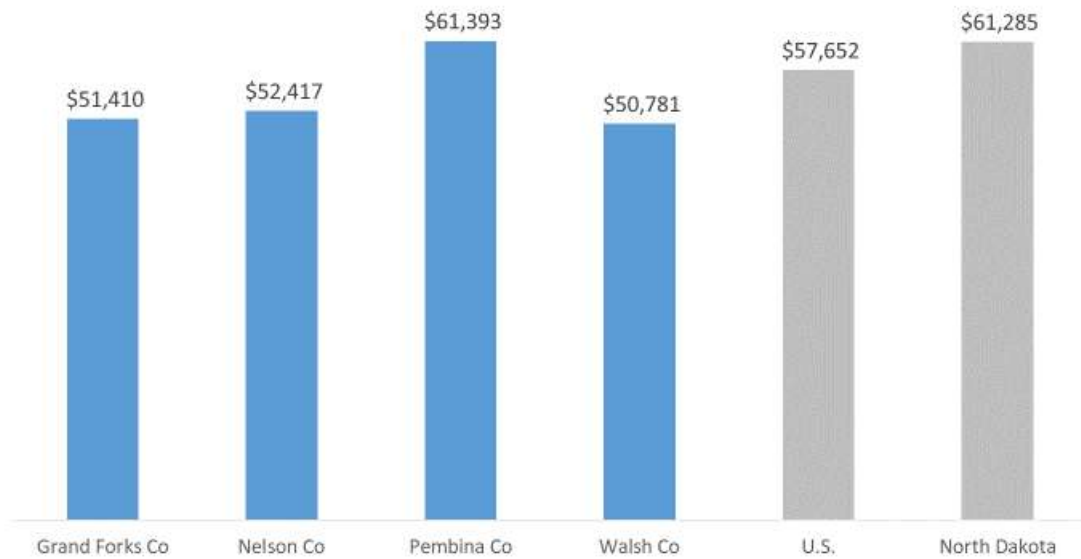


Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. began construction of drone training academy. In late 2018, General Atomics recently announced an expansion of its five-acre site to 20 acres and expanding its business to include sensor testing, training and development activities. In August 2018, General Atomics employed 47 people.

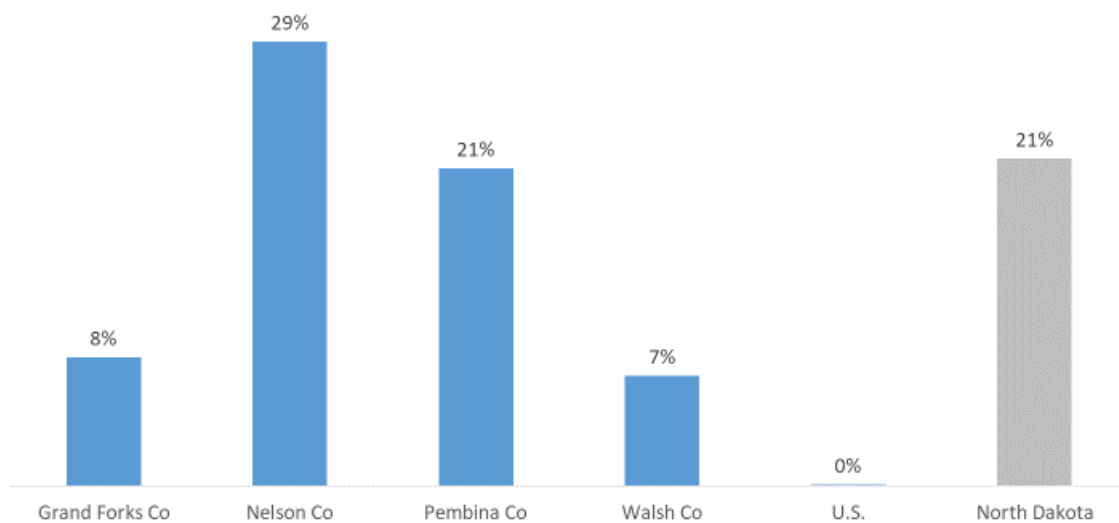
### Median Household Income

Pembina County ranks the highest for median household income in Region 4 at \$61,393 in 2017 which is above both the US (\$61,285) and state (\$57,652) income levels. The other three counties range from \$50,781 to \$52,417. Even more important is the growth trend in median household income within the region. Between 2009 and 2017, Nelson County had the highest growth rate of 29% with Pembina County trailing at 21%. Grand Forks and Walsh were significantly less at 8% and 7% respectively while the state was at 21% and the nation at 0%.

Median Household Income, 2017



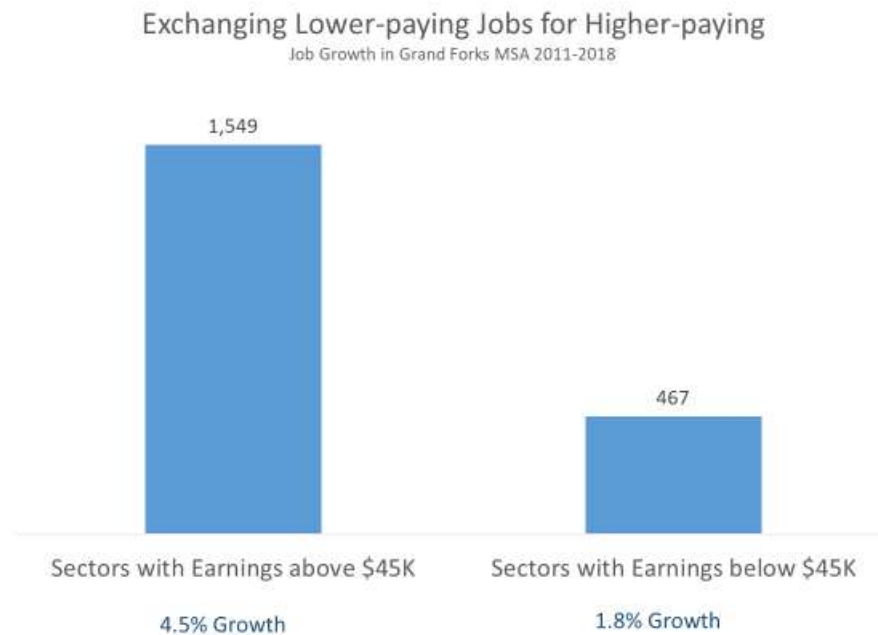
Median Household Income Growth, 2009-2017



### Job Shifting in Grand Forks Metropolitan Statistical Area

Between 2011 and 2018, the job growth in industry sectors with higher earnings (>\$45,000) significantly outpaced growth lower-paying industry sectors. There were 1,549 new higher paying jobs or an increase of

4.5% while the lower paying jobs amounted to 467 or 1.8% growth.



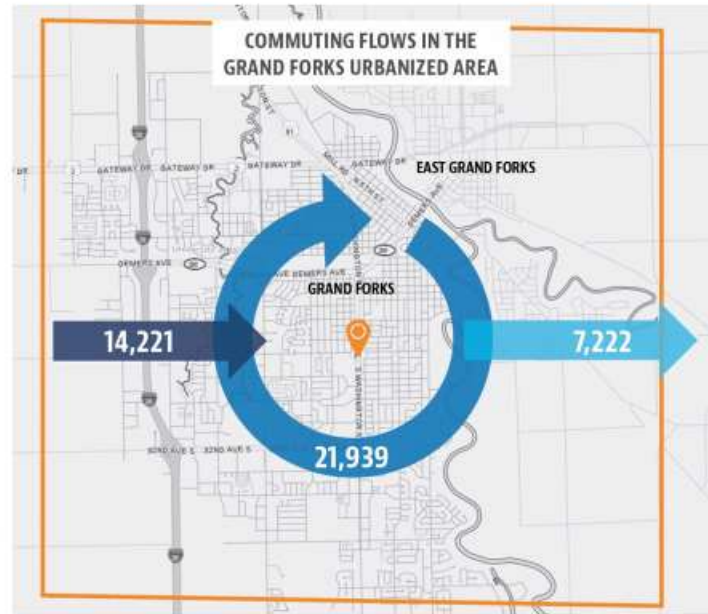
## Regionalization

Simply put, the region operates as a region daily as demonstrated by the commuting patterns as shown below. The 21,000-person labor force within the city of Grand Forks is largely based on in-migration of more than 14,000 people while more than 7,000 leave the city for work daily. The rural Grand Forks County communities largely serve as bedroom communities to the City of Grand Forks. For example, the percentage of people that remain in Northwood and Larimore to work is only 26% and 11% respectively while no other community in Grand Forks County retains more than 2.5% of their labor force. County residents are willing to commute (generally this distance is less than 30 minutes) for job opportunities and take advantage of a rural community lifestyle.

In 2017, the advocacy for the increase of ½% to the Grand Forks city sales tax included that 50% of the sales tax is generated by those residing outside the city which was slated to be used city infrastructure. The vote passed with a 72% margin. In 2017, the total local sales tax generated was \$27 million, therefore, \$13.5 million generated by residents living outside the city. Commuting patterns also demonstrate that people live and work within a region rather than one single community. Two-thirds of the Grand Forks trade area resides outside the city limits. Therefore, investing in companies that provide jobs, create economic activities and critical services are vital to Grand Fork's economic health.

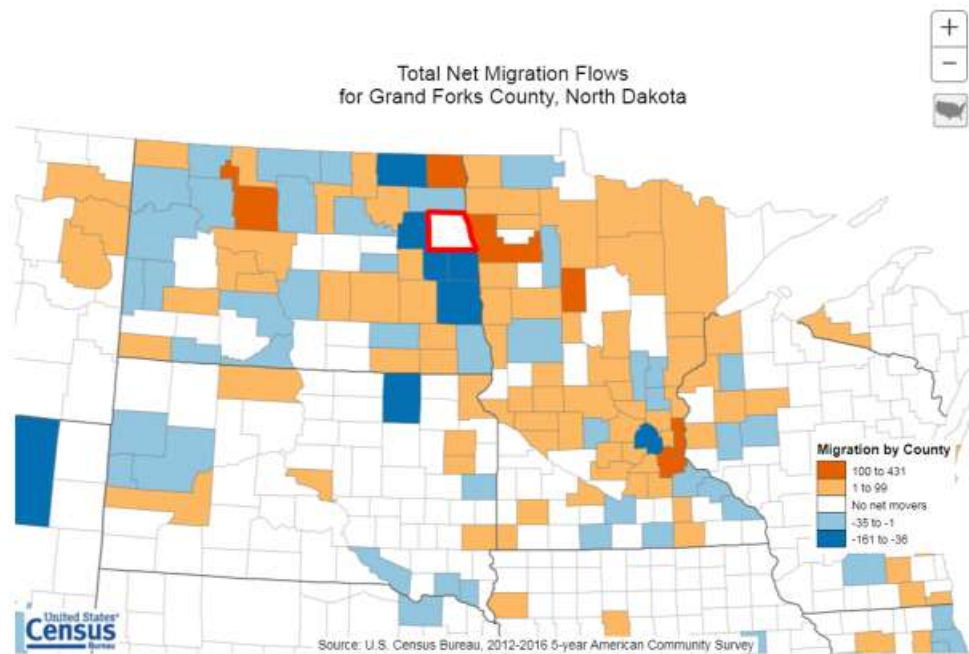
## COUNTY RESIDENTS ARE WILLING TO COMMUTE & LIVE IN SMALL TOWNS

Northwood retains **26%** of its residents in jobs within the city and Larimore retains **11%**. No other town outside of Grand Forks retains more than 2.5% of its residents for jobs inside the city.



### Migration Trends to Grand Forks County

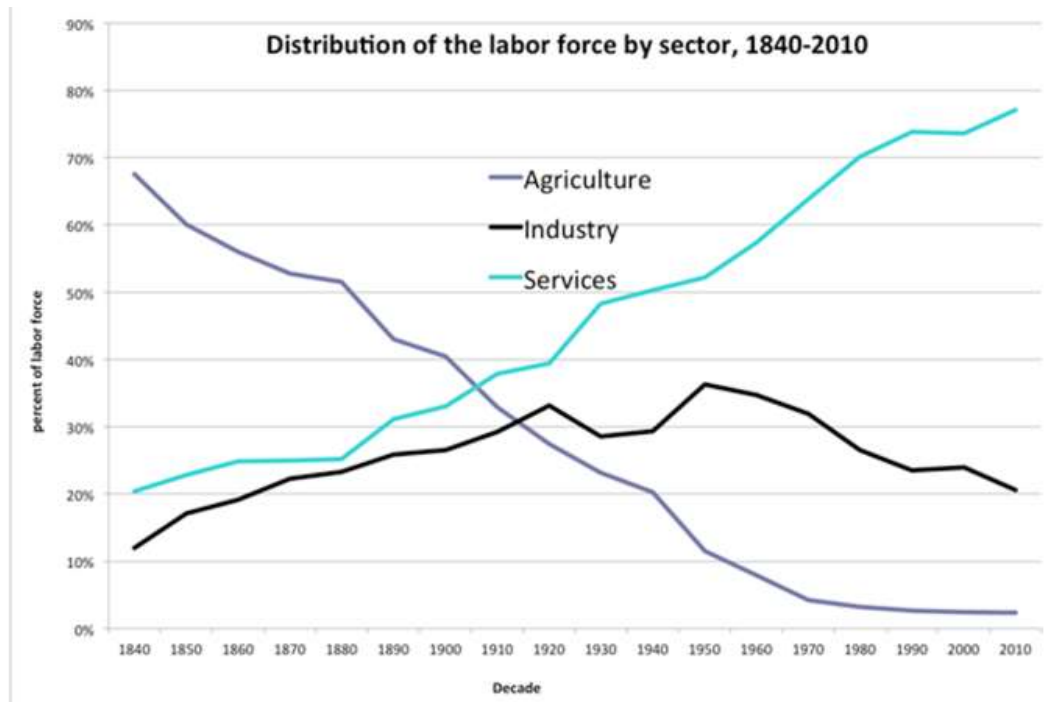
Between 2012 and 2016, Grand Forks County had a net increase in population of 2,581 people with 5,822 coming from other states while 3,241 left for other states. The county had a slight net increase of 135 people from within North Dakota and 590 people in from abroad. From within the state, in migration was most from Pembina and Ward (which includes the Minot Air Force Base) Counties while largely losing population to the oil patch in western North Dakota. Grand Forks County also drew people from southern California, Arizona, and gained and lost people from the Minneapolis area.



### The Changed Agricultural Dynamic

There has been an ever-changing shift in the agriculture industry which has had a substantial impact on rural communities across the country – most significantly in the labor force. While agriculture was nearly 70% of the labor force during the time North Dakota was founded in the mid-1800s, it has been on a decline since with an apparent stabilization beginning in the 1990s and is now less than 5% of the labor force. In Region 4, agriculture amounts to more than 5,250 jobs or 8.7% of the total labor force in 2018.

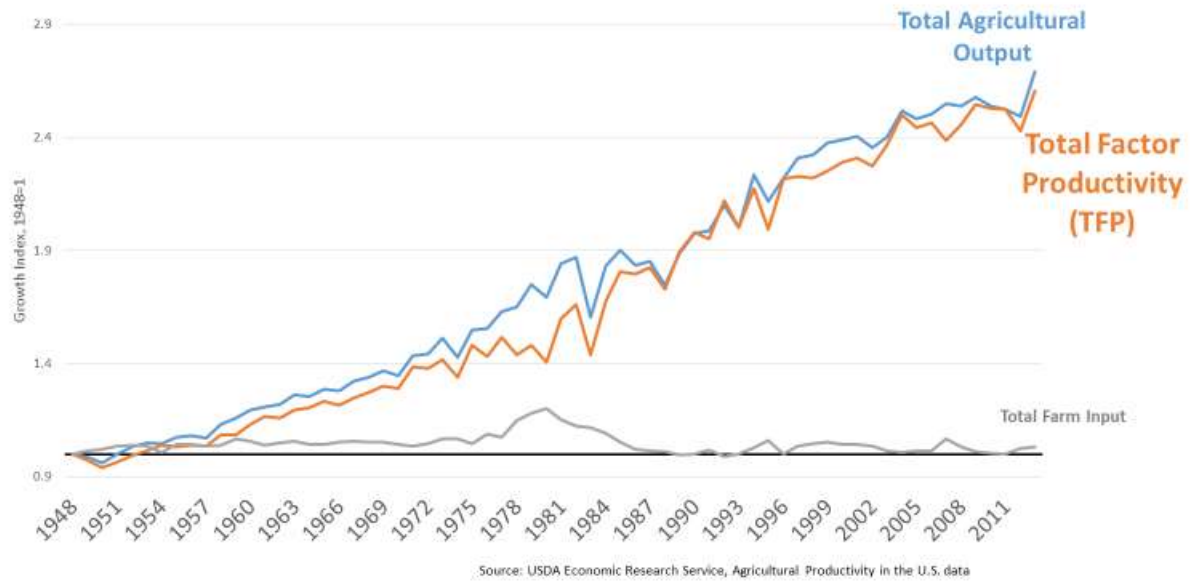
Agriculture is the backbone of our rural communities and heavy contributor to the regional economy. The trade war between the US and China has had a substantial impact on North Dakota growers – the top producer of soybeans in the US. In 2018, there was more than \$12 billion in federal aid appropriated for assistance to farmers nationwide and there are calls for aid again in 2019 due to the lack of settlement on the trade issues. After a slight increase in 2018, [net farm income is expected to drop for the sixth year in a row to half the 2013 levels.](#)



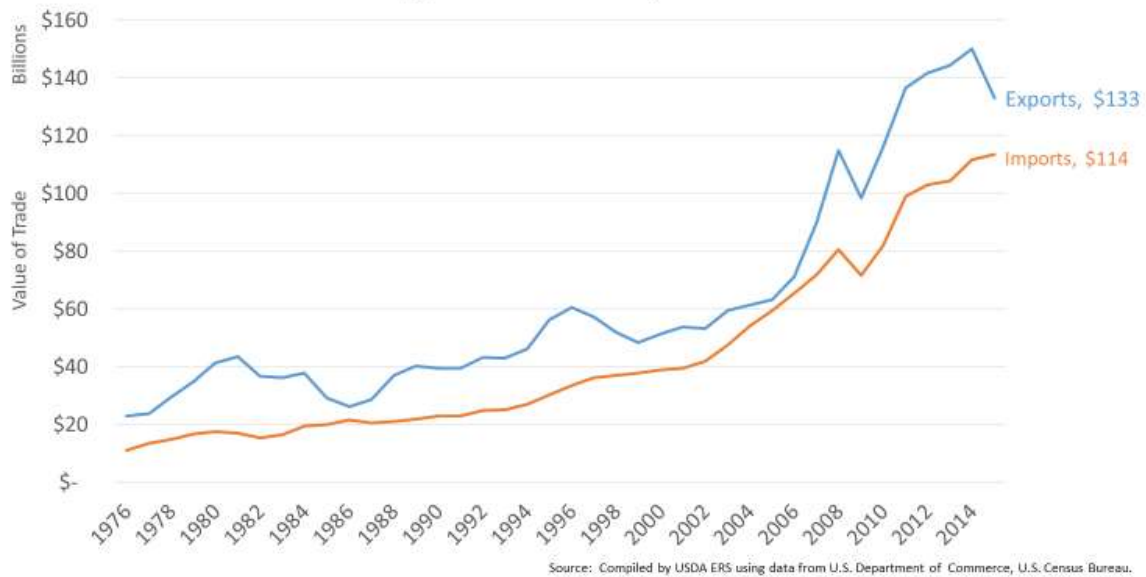
During the same time as jobs continued to decrease in agriculture, the value of output steadily increased. The following chart shows the volatility of the agricultural industry in the short term but also a long term positive growth trend in both total agricultural output as well as total factor productivity between 1948 and 2013. Both import and export of agricultural commodities have increased since 1976 with more significant growth beginning in 2006. Today, US trade policy is having a negative impact on North Dakota commodities such as soybeans to China. While Cass County (ND) is the top soybean county in the country, North Dakota ranks as the 4<sup>th</sup> top exporter of soybeans in the US. US soybean producers have been exporting 60% of their crop to China which has become a heated commodity in a trade war between the US and China and as result, Brazil has been able to increase its exports to China. In 2018, the US exported half of its soybean crop to China and in 2019, this has dropped by nearly 75%.



U.S. Agricultural Inputs, Output, and Total Factor Productivity, 1948-2013



U.S. Agricultural Trade, 1976-2015



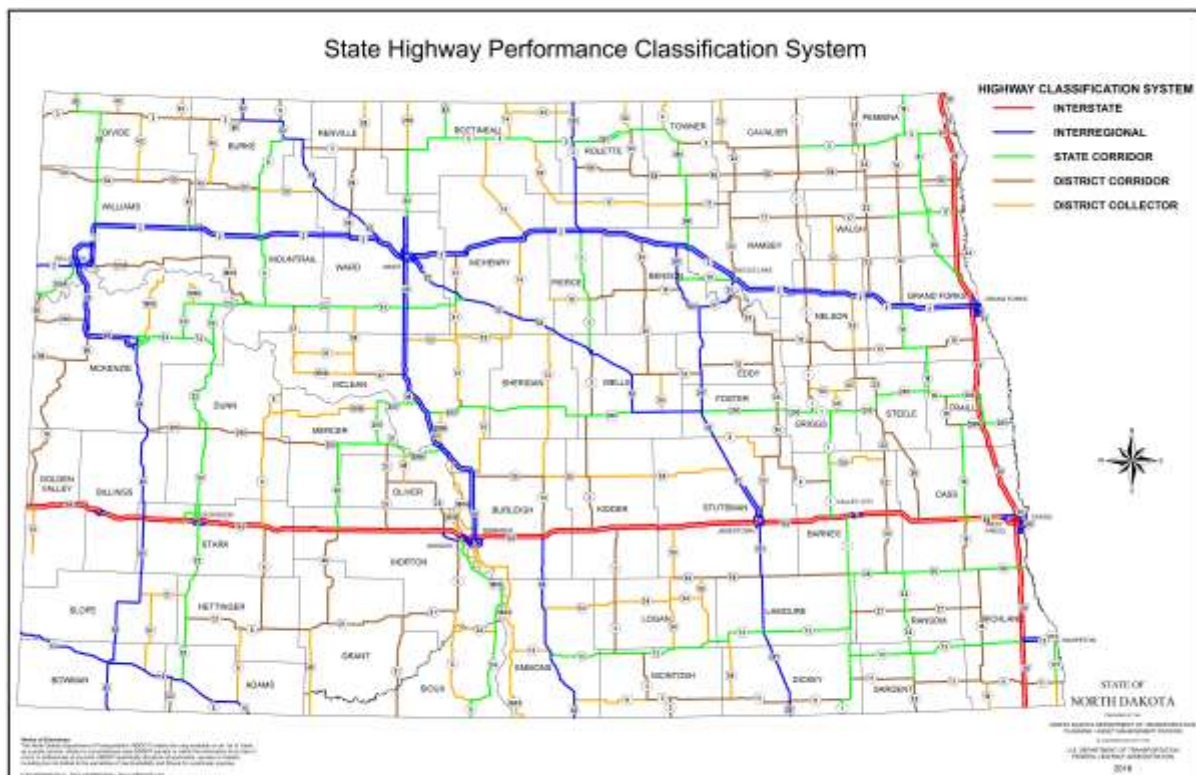
## Part Three: Infrastructure Overview

Region 4 is connected through a variety of infrastructure that assists with transportation, shipping, utilities, and more. These systems support both the general population as well as the industries located within and around the region.

There is a [lack of adequate resources to complete costly water, sewer and road infrastructure investments](#) in the rural communities – much less community enhancements – without grant funding. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development recently released 2015 census data that increased the number of communities with a majority of low- and moderate-income (LMI) households from 10 communities to 26. Communities rely on grant and low interest debt funding from CDBG, FEMA, State Water Commission, Army Corps of Engineers, USDA-RD, Bank of ND, ND Public Finance Agency and others to complete local projects.

### Highway System

The following is a map of the state highway system. Region 4 has a four-lane interstate highway (I-29) running north and south which is part of an international trade corridor. Region 4 also has a four-lane state highway with Highway 2 running from Grand Forks through Nelson County and continuing to western North Dakota to Williston. There are a number of state highways throughout Region 4 as well.





The region is home to the 5<sup>th</sup> largest border crossing between Canada and the United States and is the largest crossing between Detroit, MI and Blaine, WA. It is one of three 24-hour entries in ND. The Pembina-Emerson port bi-directional traffic is expected to double between now and 2035 with traffic volumes exceeding two million vehicles per year. Commercial trade at the port is expected to reach nearly \$30 billion by 2035. The Emerson-Pembina is the major port of entry on the mid-continent trade corridor – a network that stretches from the Mexico-Texas border through Manitoba servicing a consumer marketplace of approximately 110 million people. In ND, this is the I-29 corridor. Seventy-five percent of Manitoba's trade with the US occurs at this port of entry. Approximately one million tourist per year leave Manitoba through this port of entry into North Dakota heading for destination such as Grand Forks, Fargo, and elsewhere. The US government recently completed major improvements to the US entry while the City of Emerson through their economic development organization are currently strategizing on the creation of the Emerson Port Authority to ease congestion, create trade efficiencies and enhance the economic development opportunity in the area. The port authority is in the development stages and leadership has been engaging with regional leaders in northeastern ND. There are two additional ports of entry at Natchez and Walhalla.

### Bridges and Paved and Gravel Roads

In 2016, the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute at NDSU completed analysis of road and bridge deficiencies across the state and provided cost estimates for improvements over the next 20 years. As illustrated in the map below, Walsh County is particularly hard hit with bridge conditions of "Poor" – the lowest rating. It is one of the hardest hit areas of the state. Grand Forks and Pembina Counties also have several deficient bridges.

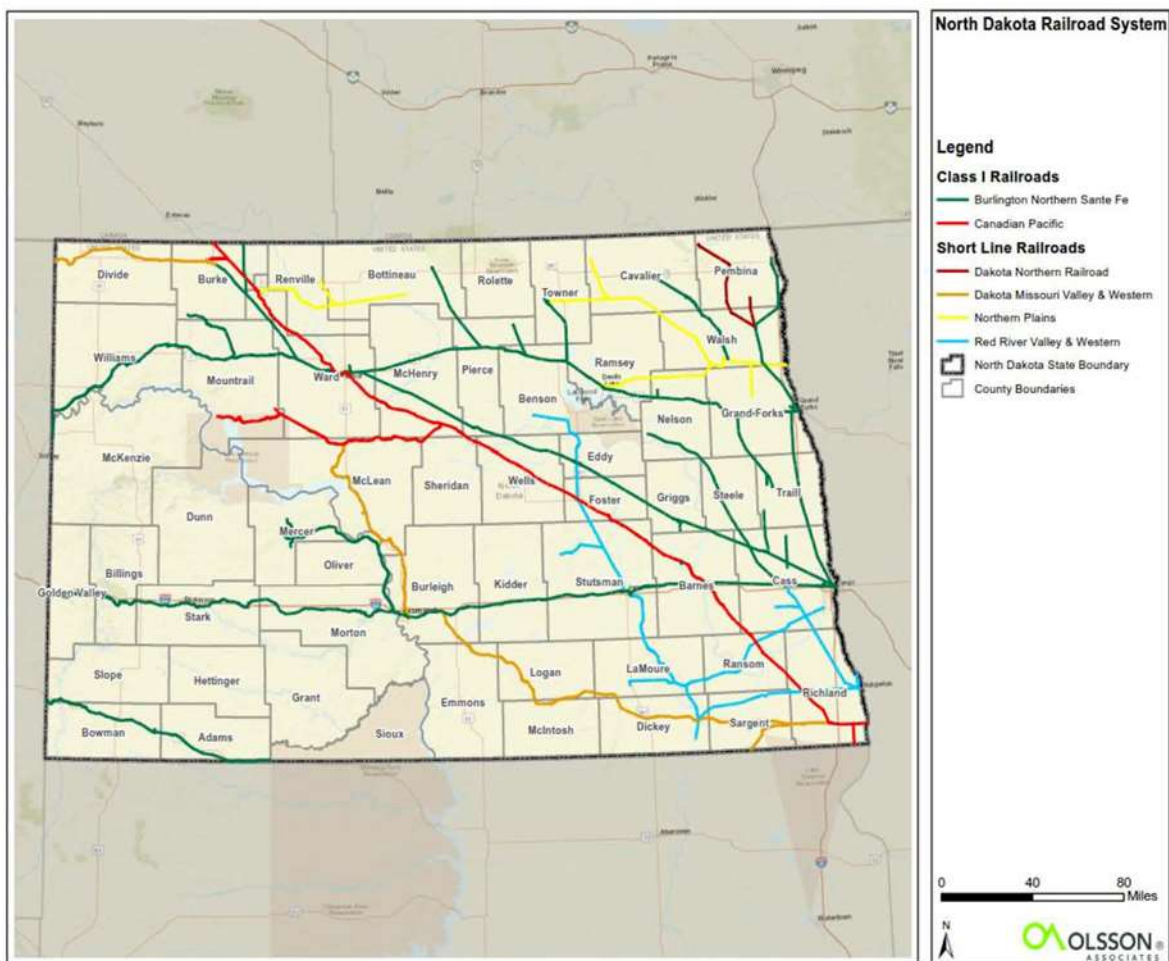
In the follow map, UGPTI has estimated the total cost of gravel, roads and bridges from 2017 to 2037. Pembina County \$161 million; Walsh County \$299 million; Nelson County \$89 million; and Grand Forks County \$328 million. The total estimated Region 4 cost is \$877 million.





## Railroad

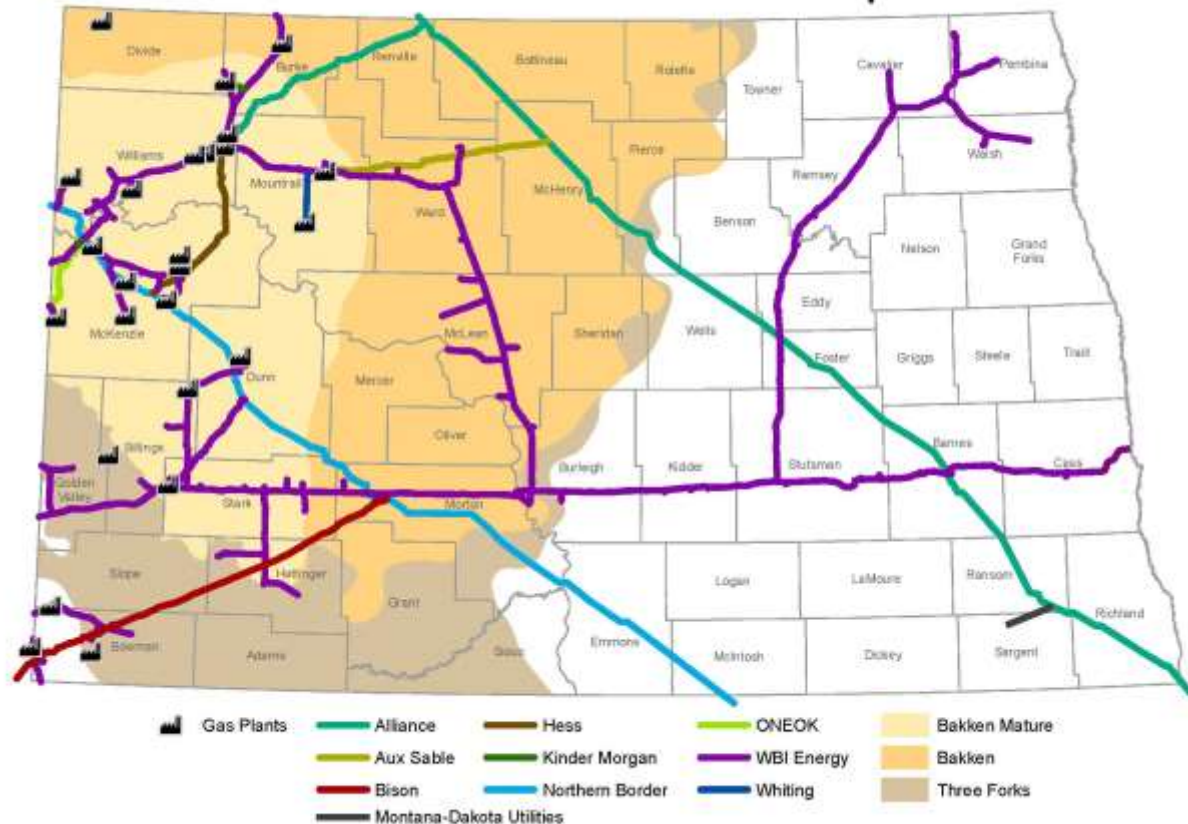
Region 4 is served by Class I Railroad company Burlington Northern as well as several short line railroads including Northern Plains and Dakota Northern as illustrated in the map below. [Deteriorating rail infrastructure](#) on secondary lines is becoming an issue. In July 2018, there was a fire that destroyed a bridge of a line north of Cavalier that would have resulted in a lack of rail transportation for agricultural commodities in northern Pembina County. Truck transportation was estimated at 30 to 40% more costly and inadequate supply of trucking to accommodate the level of commodities that the railroad did. Rail companies cite inadequate profit to maintain this infrastructure. In this single instance, multiple parties joined forces to pay for the repairs, however, this is a sign of more issues to come as it relates to rail infrastructure serving small rural communities.



## Natural Gas

Natural gas service is in Walsh and Pembina Counties and within the cities of Grafton, Park River, Cavalier, and Walhalla. There are industries in the cities of Niche and Pembina that also desire natural gas service however the cost has been prohibitive to extend the current pipelines currently. The following is a map of the ND natural gas pipelines.

## North Dakota Natural Gas Pipelines

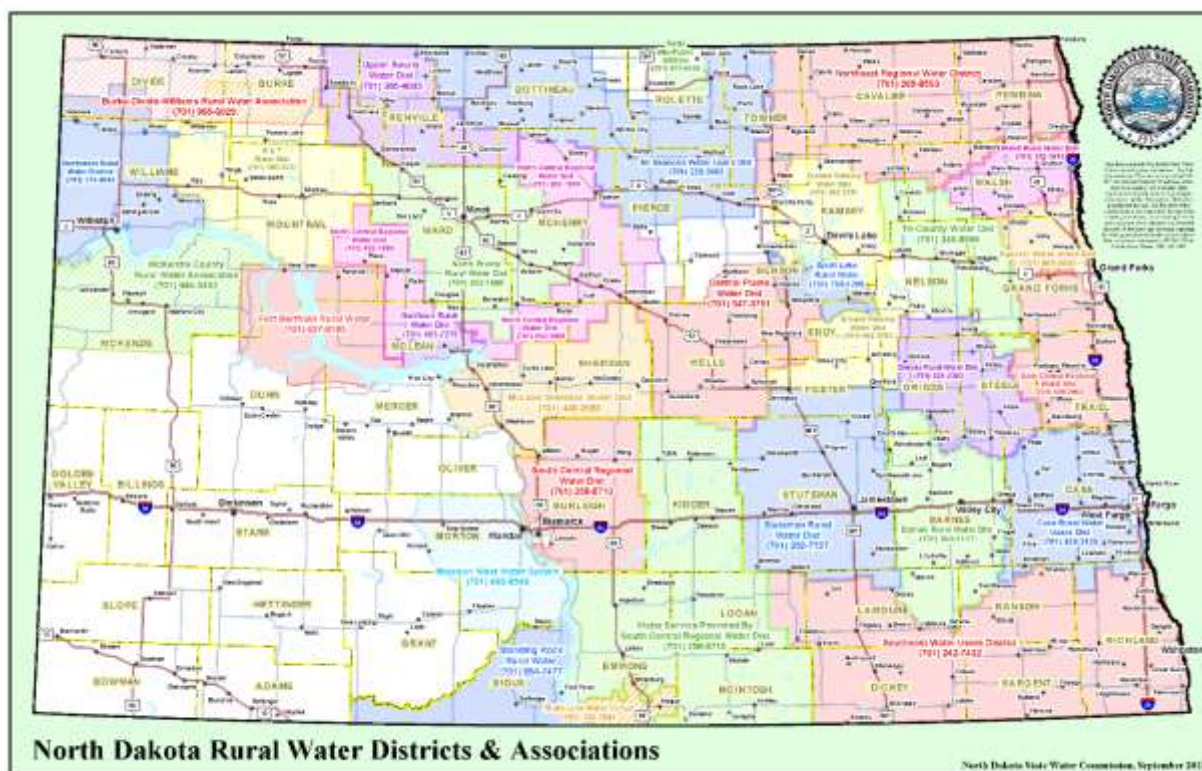


Updated: February 2019

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### Rural Water Systems

Region 4 is served by six rural water districts. Several small rural communities have also turned to the rural water systems for their drinking water supply due to the high cost of maintaining water treatment infrastructure. The rural water systems belong to the ND Association of Rural Water Systems which was established in 1974 to coordinate rural water systems throughout the state. The Association has a goal of assuring quality water supply to all North Dakotans. The Association also provides advocacy for funding rural water projects. There are no identifiable gaps in water service in Region 4 currently.



## Internet Service

Quality internet service is essential to economic development efforts. Polar Communications is a major internet service provider as a cooperative headquartered in Park River. The following map illustrates the Polar Communications service territory which blankets much of Region 4 serving 18,000 customers in rural areas. Polar Communications has received awards for being one of the top ten fastest internet service providers as well as one of the top five DSL providers in North Dakota (small provider category). DSL service is available to approximately 1,000 customers currently. Century Link is a large internet, cable and phone supplier in the region.

The Dakota Carrier Network (DCN) announced in August 2019 that it has completed the installation of one-gigabit internet circuits to all K-12 schools in North Dakota. With this, North Dakota has become the first state in the United States to accomplish this. This project was done in partnership with its 14 owner companies and the ND Information Technology Department. The map below illustrates all the schools that have benefitted from this initiative.







STAGenet Gigabit Locations



## Electricity

Nodak Electric serves nearly all of Region 4. The following is a map of all rural electric cooperatives in North Dakota. This map illustrates the coverage by Nodak in Region 4. Nodak was founded in 1940 as result of the region having difficulty completing individual projects in the region. Today, Nodak serves 14,000 members.



Perhaps unique to Region 4, there are several communities which have municipal electricity including Cavalier, Grafton, Lakota, Northwood, and Park River. For these communities, this has provided an additional revenue source.

## Part Four: Recreational and Cultural Assets

### Outdoor Recreation

Northeastern North Dakota has numerous natural and outdoor assets that assist with developing destinations as well as increasing the quality of life. These assets include numerous paved and unpaved trails, parks, campgrounds, golf courses and more as listed below:

- Two state parks and one state recreation area: Turtle River State Park, Icelandic State Park, Pembina Gorge State Recreation Area. These areas offer trail systems, fossil dig, kayaking/paddle boarding, nature educational and recreational programming and interpretive centers.
- Two county parks: Stump Lake Park and Homme Dam.
- State-designed scenic backway connecting Cavalier to the Pembina Gorge.
- Multiple bodies of water for public use: Homme Dam, Stump Lake, Larimore Dam, Lake Renwick, Matecjek Dam, Red River of the North, and Sheyenne, Park, and Pembina Rivers
- Snowmobile trail system for hundreds of miles with warming houses
- Ski/snowboard/mountain bike terrain park in Frost Fire Park
- The Pembina Gorge is a pristine river valley with steep valley cliffs towering over small isolated prairies and pocketed wetlands and the largest undisturbed forest in North Dakota. The Pembina Gorge is a 12,500-acre four season playground full of rarities that attract tens of thousands of explorers annually.
- Several community golf courses
- Numerous community parks and RV campgrounds.

To make continued amenity development feasible, the region has 1.2 million people within a two-hour drive to market to and draw from to boost main street traffic alongside the natural amenities. Several communities have taken advantage of the opportunity to attract Canadian seasonal tenants in regional campgrounds.

### Cultural History

The region has a rich cultural history as the first settled area of North Dakota driven by fur trading in the upper Red River Valley. Alexander Henry established a post at Pembina for fur trading in 1801 that after 1812 became the center for an agricultural colony sponsored by the British Crown. The Red River Valley fell under American control in 1818 when the London Convention established the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as the northern boundary between the US and British possessions in North America. In the Red River Valley, the fur trade created a new nation, the Métis. Descended from



Euro-American fur trade employees and Chippewa Indian women, the Métis melded the two cultures in language, lifestyle, and economy. In 1843, regular caravans of high-wheeled, wooden Red River carts began hauling buffalo robes and pemmican, the proceeds from semi-annual hunts, to St. Paul along well-worn trails. The Métis center in the United States was St. Joseph (now Walhalla), and men such as Antoine Gingras headed a self-conscious new nation. The Méti nation, however, faded as the buffalo became ever less available east of the Missouri River. In 1851, the first post office in the state was established at Pembina and the city was the most populous in the state in the 1860 Census. North Dakota became a state in 1889. Pembina is also home to the Pembina State Museum which was built recently and has a seven-story observation tower.

## Part Five: Educational Resources and Workforce Development and Other Assets

The region is served well with both K-12 and post-secondary education as well as two career and technology centers in Grafton and Grand Forks. The University of North Dakota is in Grand Forks and enrolled more than 14,500 students in the 2018 to 2019 school year. The university has niche programs in aviation, medicine, law, and unmanned aircraft systems as well as several undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs. UND is also home to the Energy and Environmental Research Center. The EERC is a research, development, demonstration, and commercialization facility for energy and environment technologies development. UND also has the Center for Innovation which offers business development and entrepreneurship services. Northland Technical College is a two-year community and technical college with a campus in East Grand Forks, MN and a second campus in Thief River Falls, MN with total enrollment of approximately 4,500 students.



*Jason Lindell, owner of Sundog Glass Studio, teaches students about his fused glass business*

Since 2013, the RRRRC has led the development of a Youth Entrepreneurship and Workforce Development Initiative in partnership with the Pembina and Walsh County JDAs, North Valley Career and Technology Center and 24 regional school districts through a series of programs from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades. Manufacturers have also been a partner in the initiative. Today more than 1,500 students participate in the array of programs. A brochure describing this initiative is included in the appendix. In Grand Forks, there is an annual Career Expo for high school juniors to visit with regional employers and participate in demonstrations of careers. More than 2,500 students from the upper Red River Valley participate in this expo.



*7<sup>th</sup> grade students toured Marvin on MFG Day*



The region has [strong healthcare facilities](#) with hospitals and/or clinics in Walhalla, Cavalier, Drayton, Park River, Grafton, Lakota, McVie, Northwood, Larimore, and Grand Forks. Several facilities including Park River, Grafton, Cavalier and McVie have made recent significant investments in upgrades, handicap accessibility, HVAC systems and more. The rural areas have struggled with retaining adequate volunteers for the volunteer ambulance services as the volunteers age, stop volunteering and continued population decline.

[Lack of adequate affordable housing at both low- and middle-income levels](#) is also a barrier to growth. Many homes on the market are aged and require investment. The lack of housing options at the middle-income level is a barrier to attracting teachers, medical providers, and other professionals. The rural communities struggle with an appraisal gap on new construction homes which results in the homeowner having to invest higher levels of equity and is often cost prohibitive as the resulting new home value is less than the cost. The RRRC has assisted with more than \$2 million of low-income housing rehabilitation in the past ten years and has also found there are issues with low assessed values that prohibited rehabilitation as the cost was more than the assessed value of the home.

The [changing retail community is impacting main streets](#) in the region as well as Grand Forks. The shifts in retail as well as a loss of Canadian shoppers the past few years in Grand Forks due to the exchange rate, has had a substantial impact. Many big box stores have closed in the region including Macys, Kmart, Shopko, Pier One, and more. At the same time, a smaller model in Dollar General has recently opened numerous stores in the region with the rural communities reporting a positive impact. The City of Lakota reported a 30% gain in sales tax revenue due to the new Dollar General store. The large vacant buildings have created a public perception that our communities are suffering. At the same time, online retailers like Amazon provide goods to regional residents which make the region quite livable with two-day shipping – particularly on items that cannot be found locally. The state recently addressed sales tax collection with online sales following a Supreme Court ruling that allowed for this and it was implemented starting on October 1, 2018. Sales tax collection is levied on companies with more than \$100,000 or 200 separate transactions in a year. In the first quarter, ND reported \$5 million in revenue from this source. In 2019, the legislature also approved retailers may be open before noon on Sundays which takes effect in August. This has been a legislative battle dating back to the 1980s and was approved with a one vote margin in the Senate and a wide margin in the House.

## [Regional Assets](#)

Perhaps our greatest strength is the ability to work together. The RRRC forges many partnerships as it sees the need or opportunities. The following is a listing of organizations within the region that readily come together to achieve economic/community development goals:

- Nelson, Pembina, and Walsh County Job Development Authorities
- Grand Forks Region EDC
- Grand Forks Growth Fund and JDA
- Local economic development groups
- Chambers of Commerce
- Red River Valley Community Action Agency
- Center for Innovation
- Small Business Development Center



- Praxis Strategy Group

The RRRC has advocated regional thinking as it relates to economic/community development. More and more, this mentality is being adopted and most recently demonstrated by a policy adjustment with the Grand Forks Growth Fund financially supporting business development in the rural communities of Grand Forks County in early 2019.

### Three Strategic Initiatives

As result of the 2014 CEDS, the RRRC also developed three key strategic initiatives as listed below:

1. **Rendezvous Region Tourism Council.** Now connecting three counties, this recently resurrected group has a governing board of 15 members, meets monthly, developed a strong social media and online presence, and rallied more than 100 members by the end of 2018. The RRTC's mission is to promote/market the region, educate members, and support continued amenity development.
2. **Northeast Manufacturing Group.** This group was established in 2016 to gather manufacturers and food processors in Pembina and Walsh Counties which employ more than 1,200 people to find synergies, develop educational programming, and address common issues – the top issue being workforce development to fill the many job openings.
3. **21st Century Workforce Development.** This initiative began in 2014 with the launch of Marketplace for Kids as an entrepreneurial training program for students in grades 3-8. Today, this initiative engages more than 1,500 students in grades 3-12 and touches each of the four counties in the region focused on both entrepreneurship and workforce development. In 2019, this initiative will include a focus on connecting regional employers with students through cooperative work experiences as well as a social media campaign on the job and career opportunities within the region.





## SWOT Analysis

The following section provides a look at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) within northeast North Dakota. This section was developed with input from the CEDS Committee, working knowledge of the area based on the RRRC's daily work, interactions with a variety of development-minded people or groups within the region or impacting the region, and input from the Board of Directors.



### Strengths:

- Income
- Wage
- Education
- Programs easy to work with
- People collaboration
- Not Fargo/Bismarck = ability to build
- Less bureaucracy and more agility
- Space
- Inclusive – tolerant vs. accepting
- Creative – desperate – creative
- Resourceful
- Strong institutions in healthcare, ag and manufacturing
- Natural amenities – proximity, recreation
- Senior-heavy demographic – precious generation and immigration culture
- Entrepreneurial ecosystem is building
- Infrastructure including broadband
- K-12 / “Career Academy” – K-12 and willing to partner
- Center for Innovation

### Opportunities

- Rural entrepreneurship hotbed
- Market the “simple” life, desire for rural living
- Place and space
- Cultural shift to support your community
- Train the people we have
- Main Street as a real estate incentive
- Access to Canada and livability
- What we have – tell the story
- Have built capacity
- Collaboration – the thought leaders have been gathered
- Demographic trends – growth in young
- Unmet desire to live rural
- More shop local and experiential shopping
- Change message with kids now
- UND
- Tap personal networks for resources

### Weaknesses

- Poverty staying the same, strong demand for foodbanks
- Income gap
- Support aging population
- Lack of economic development resources
- Economic development silos
- Need to educate commissioners
- Thin leadership pool
- Crisis-driven mentality
- Don't reach out to new
- Need for regulatory flexibility
- Cost of infrastructure limiting housing development
- Trailing assessments limit tax base
- Lacking capital for real estate development
- Housing – lack of \$50k to 150k availability
- Labor availability
- Instant gratification culture

### Threats

- Innovation job loss
- Lack of resources in Main Street Initiative

## Issues

- Mental barrier of driving north for fun

## Advice

- Be patient – it's a marathon
- Just lead
- Keep going – persist
- Start taking risks
- Fund failure
- Stay the course
- Fail forward
- Have each other's backs
- Collectively FLY
- Power together
- Embrace fear

## Questions:

- Why lower poverty but high in schools – definition?
- What are we doing to attract more people?
- Are we welcoming enough?
- Are we tolerant or do we accept?
- More ... more of what?

## Tensions

- Old vs. new economic development thinking
- Self-interest vs. common interest
- Perception of silos vs. reality

## How would we define success?

- Population loss stops
- Economic business growth
- More 25-34-year olds
- More immigration and in-migration, increased diversity
- Poverty down
- Reduce job openings
- Create a vibe / culture identity
- "They're talking about us"
- Thought process away from "we need more"
- Leverage productive economy
- Diversity increased
- Measure a collaborative ecosystem

## Ideas:

- More collaboration
- More citizen/business investment
- Community foundations
- Ramp up post-secondary education – adult and youth
- Legacy Fund for community development
- Tell story – welcome home
- Buy local movement



### Why did you come today?

- Impact
- Support
- Knowledge/learn/understand
- RRRC board member
- Get it done
- Economic opportunity for the region – community support
- Emergency management
- Step forward
- Lifer – grass roots
- Business owner
- Connect and organize
- Regional support = strength
- Listen and share ideas
- Vision / Planning
- Be informed
- Leadership
- Collaborate
- I care
- I was asked
- Juices

### Take aways:

- More alike than different
- Celebrate one another
- Harness the excitement



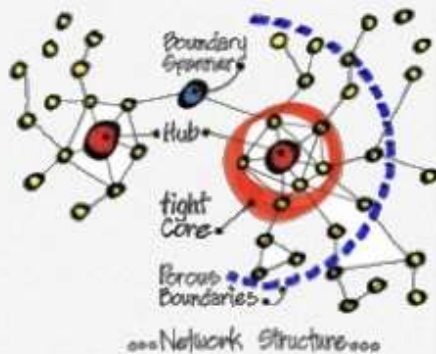
*Committee discussion*

## A Cultural Shift

Over the past five years, the RRRC has initiated three strategic initiatives and developed regional collaboration and recognition of a shared economy regionally. This work has resulted in linking schools, communities and industry – working together to sustain and build both the economy and community. Often the RRRC is the link, the connector to bring ideas to actions to results. Upon studying “Strategic Doing” by Purdue University, we’ve found much of our work in centered in this methodology. The power in further implementing strategic doing would be in sharing these strategies more broadly with our partners and [challenge leadership to be become civic entrepreneurs or to stand behind these people within their communities.](#)

Strategic doing is lead by a core team as highlighted in the graphic below. The “Core Team” would be the close partners that the RRRC has developed and this is dynamic based on the strategy or idea. The core team is built upon trust and a willingness to move forward together in true collaborations leveraging the strengths of the individuals and organizations within the core team. The “porous boundaries” of the core team provide a way for the core team to be innovative, creative and leverage new ideas and learning to continue implementing strategies. The core team is constantly seeking the boundary spanners to leverage expertise or resources as needed. There is open participation to the network. The strategies are ever evolving as the team continues to learn, explore, do, and adapt.

## The Structure of an Effective Innovation Network



*Innovating networks share several characteristics in common. They have tight cores and porous boundaries. Boundary spanners within the network continuously search for new opportunities to link to other networks.*

**Tight cores** enable an innovating network to stay focused and organized. Typically, this means that the network is managed by a core team. The core team relies on frequent communication to translate ideas into action.

**Porous boundaries** to the network ensure that information flows both into and out from the network. In practical terms, the network is open to new ideas and learning.

**Boundary spanners** look for opportunities to increase the scale of the innovating network by linking to people embedded in other networks.

The concepts of "top-down" or "bottom-up" do not apply to networks; since networks do not have tops or bottoms. (These appear in hierarchies, but not networks.)

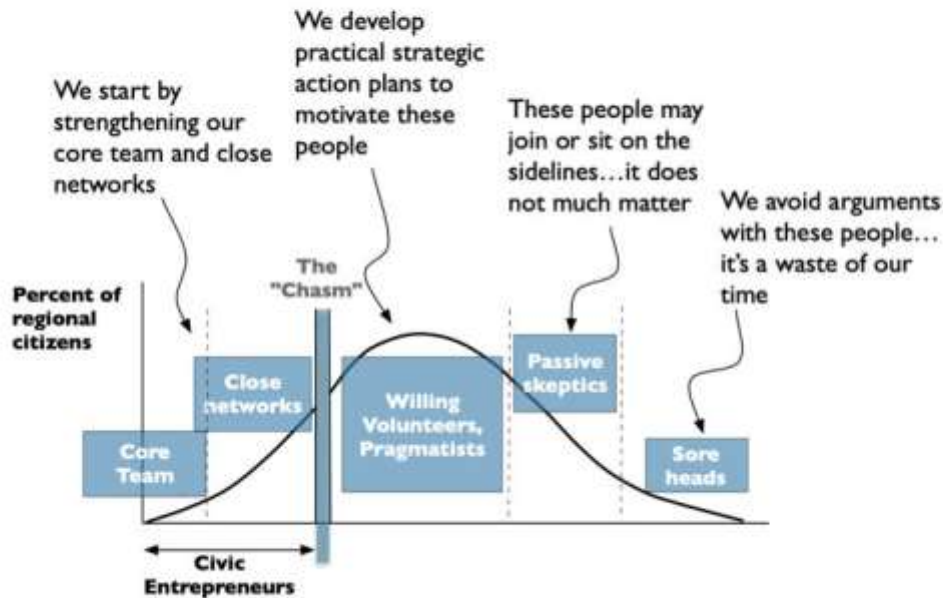
Instead, effective innovating networks balance both leadership guidance from the core team and open participation through porous boundaries and boundary spanning.

The network-based strategy curve illustrated below is like the diffusion innovation theory. The diffusion innovation theory seeks to explain how, why and at what rate new ideas and technology spread. The theory was crafted by Everett Rogers in 1962. Opinion leaders can also influence, positively or negatively, the acceptance of a new idea. The following is an excerpt from Strategic Doing: Ten Skills for Agile Leadership (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2019).

- **Pioneers** (16%) are the core team and close networks and known as **civic entrepreneurs**. The people leading the charge and eager to change – typically a small group.
- **Pragmatists** (68%) will go along with change as soon as they see it is prudent to do so – they want to see that their time and/or reputation won't be wasted. This group may be split in half as early and late adopters.
- **Soreheads** (16%) are not interested in joining in. They say, and keep saying, things like "that will never work," "We've tried that before," or "What we have is good enough."

Soreheads don't transform human civilization. We let the tyranny of the few suck the energy out of the efforts when we should rather concentrate on getting the pragmatists to engage. After a reasonable amount of effort to make sure you understand one another, just move on. We can't let the sorehead drag us all down. The most effective way to move forward is high participation and high guidance. Everyone's voice is heard but the discussion is guided and has direction.

A network-based strategy — clusters, ecosystems, open innovation — will work to transform a regional economy. The challenge involves staying focused as you innovate.



Source: Ed Morrison, Copyright, 2006; Distributed with a Creative Commons Attribution Share-alike 2.5 License  
Based on Everett M. Rogers, Diffusion of Innovations (Free Press, 2003) and Geoffrey A. Moore, Crossing the Chasm (HarperCollins, 1991).

## Ten Skills for Strategic Doing

1. Create and maintain a safe space for deep, focused conversation
2. Frame the conversation with the right question
3. Identify your assets, including the hidden ones
4. Link and leverage assets to identify new opportunities
5. Look for the "big easy"
6. Convert your ideas to outcomes with measurable characteristics
7. Start slowly to go fast – but start
8. Draft short-term action plans that include everyone
9. Set 30/30 meetings to review, learn and adjust



## Action Plan

### CEDS Goal #1: Support New and Existing Businesses

Strategy	Partners	Funding
Align businesses and communities with access to capital	JDA's, RRRC, EDCs, SBDC	Local, Regional, State, Federal, Private capital sources
Continue to develop the Northeast Manufacturing Group	PCJDA, RRRC	Industry sponsors, ND Dept of Commerce
Continue leading the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship Initiative	PCJDA, WCJDA, RRRC, School Districts, NVCTC, UND, Lake Region State College, Northland Technical College	ND Career and Technical Education, ND Dept of Commerce, ND Dept of Public Instruction, Industry sponsors, EDCs, JDAs
Support the continued development of Grand Sky and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) industry development in northeastern North Dakota	RRRC, GFREDC, Center for Innovation, Grand Forks County, Grand Forks County communities	Housing development funding sources on local, state and federal levels; industry sponsors



## CEDS Goal #2: Support Vibrant Community Development

Strategy	Partners	Funding
Initiate placemaking activities such as downtown, public place enhancements, streetscaping, trails, beautification, recreational amenities, and programming.	NDSU Architecture Dept, RRRC, JDAs, EDCs, Cities, Counties	Outdoor Heritage Fund, CDBG, Recreation Trails Program, Half Mill Program, JDAs, EDCs, ND Parks and Rec Dept, Garrison Conservancy District, local parks and recreation
Provide technical support to strengthen community assets including infrastructure, housing, healthcare, childcare, planning and leadership	RRRC, Cities, Counties, healthcare facilities, housing authorities, foundation, childcare providers, ND Childcare Aware	CDBG, USDA RD, HOME, ND Housing Finance Agency, Bank of ND, State Water Commission, Public Finance Agency
Consider the development or establishing a partnership of an existing entity for a regional community foundation to cultivate private public partnerships on community enhancement projects	RRRC, Community Foundation of GF and EGF and Region, ND Community Foundation, local community endowment funds, cities, local parks and recreation	Philanthropy, endowment funds, ND Community Foundation, Otto Bremer Trust

### CEDS Goal #3: Support Visitor and Destination Development

Strategy	Partners	Funding
Continue the development of the Rendezvous Region Tourism Council.	RRRC, PCJDA, CCJDA, WCJDA, ND Tourism Division, small businesses, Destination Development Association, regional, state and Canadian media	Private memberships, JDAs, Grand Forks Growth Fund, sponsorships
Continue to support the redevelopment and expansion of regional outdoor recreation and cultural amenities	RRRC, JDAs, EDCs, County parks and rec, city parks and rec, ND Parks and Rec Dept, SHPO, NDDOT, legislators	OHF, NDPRD, local and county funds, Garrison Conservancy District, Blue Cross Blue Shield, local endowment funds, ND Community Foundation, Recreation Trails Program, Land Water Conservation Fund, DOT, legislative appropriations
Support development and marketing amenities, niche businesses and activities which develop the region into a unique and interesting destination and providing experiences	RRRC, RRTC, JDAs, ND Commerce Dept, Tourism Division	JDAs, memberships, ND Tourism Division, NDPRD, BND, business finance programs at all govt levels and private lending

## CEDS Goal #4: Foster Regionalism

Strategy	Partners	Funding
Convene regional discussions and/or events with community leaders to provide education, networking, and comradery within northeastern North Dakota	RRRC, local and county governments, State government	Private and public sponsorships, EDCs, JDAs, others
Continue to provide positive public messaging of events, projects, and development goals throughout the region	RRRC	n/a
Cultivate regional partnerships on project development and investment as well as between the City of Grand Forks and the remainder of the region.	RRRC, GFREDC, City of GF, Grand Forks Herald, The Chamber of GF and EGF, UND, Center for Innovation, GF Housing Authority, GF Office of Community Development, Mayor's Office, GF County	n/a
Continue to support local development organizations such as the Nelson and Pembina County Job Development Authorities and others and implementation of their strategic plans.	RRRC, Nelson and Pembina County	County

## RED RIVER CEDS GOAL #5: Disaster Resiliency

Strategy	Partners	Funding
Maintain strong knowledge of FEMA and related disaster mitigation and recovery funding programs.	RRRC, ND Division of Emergency Services, local and county emergency services providers	FEMA, county, RRRC, city
Encourage and support disaster mitigation planning in cooperation with county emergency management offices.	RRRC, county emergency management offices, ND Division of Emergency Services	FEMA, DES, local/county





# Evaluation Framework

The annual evaluation of the goals and strategies will be completed during the CEDS evaluation and annual report process. The staff will be responsible to complete this evaluation and present to the Board of Directors. Any recommendations for changes to the CEDS will be reviewed by the Board of Directors and submitted to the Economic Development Administration.

The following criteria will be used to measure performance and effectiveness of the CEDS:

1. Number of projects, activities, and initiatives identified are implemented.
2. Number of funding applications developed and/or approved and total public and private funds invested.
3. Estimated jobs created/retained as result of completed projects.
4. Regional public outreach with press releases, social media engagement statistics, presentations provided.



## Economic Resilience

Economic resilience refers to a variety of ways that a region can rebound from a sudden or severe economic impact such as through disaster or shifts in commodity pricing. The region is prone to frequent weather disasters in spring, summer and winter. The climate offers a wide array of temperatures and changing conditions that offer snow, freezing, flooding, and heavy rains as challenges.

Due to the flat nature of the Red River Valley, the region is [prone to flooding disasters](#) either through spring floods or summer rains. Many communities such as Grand Forks, Drayton, Pembina have completed extensive flood proofing projects and the City of Grafton will complete its \$50 million river diversion project in fall 2019. The region can also be subjected to [extreme winter weather](#) with long stretches of subzero temperatures or even power outages. Heavy snowfalls can strap municipalities with excess snow removal costs or tending to power outages that put people at risk. There are also [extreme summer weather](#) conditions that can quickly result in tornadic or heavy rain activity. Federally declared disasters can become common based on weather patterns. The most recent disaster was declared in June 2019 to address spring flooding and included Grand Forks, Pembina and Walsh Counties in Region 4. Since 2000, there have been 14 federally declared disaster impacting Region 4. These disasters included high winds, tornadoes, severe storms, flooding, ground saturation, and winter storms.

To assist with mitigation and recovery efforts due to natural disasters, the counties each develop a hazard mitigation plan every five years to retain eligibility for FEMA funding. County and regional council staff partake in ongoing FEMA training to maintain a strong working knowledge of both mitigation and recovery programs. Over the past 20 years, the RRRC has assisted several local governments in buying out flood-prone properties to relieve the ongoing stress that has been associated with repetitive disasters. Within mitigation, the RRRC has assisted with numerous emergency generator systems for municipal infrastructure systems and healthcare facilities as well as public service siren systems to assist with communications during disaster situations. Several communities within the region have also undertaken permanent flood protection projects such as river diversions and flood walls and diking. The cities of Grand Forks, Drayton, Pembina, Neche, and Grafton have completed such projects. Grafton will complete its \$50 million Park River diversion projects in October 2019 which will ultimately remove the city from the 100-year flood plain. The City of Grafton estimates this will eliminate the need for \$1 million in flood insurance premiums as well as the threat of repetitive flooding.

The agriculture community experiences highs and lows that have a heavy impact on the regional economy. Currently, agriculture has been in a slump since 2012 and has been further impacted by trade wars between the United States and international partners such as China or Canada. Fortunately, the region has a diversified economic base which can support farmers through these tough periods by providing off-season



employment, flexible scheduling, etc. Most often, farm families also have off-farm employment to assist with health insurance benefits and off-farm income.

As a small region with strong partnerships with local governments/educational institutions and business community, there is frequent communication between numerous regional partners often on a monthly or quarterly basis. For example, the Northeast Manufacturing Group meets quarterly to share common issues, solve problems, and discuss any current needs. RRRC staff meets with the regional school superintendents on an as-needed basis to discuss the workforce development efforts. While these meetings are on an as-needed basis, it is approximately on a quarterly basis. Some of these partnerships have been solidified in the form of a strategic initiative such as the workforce development/manufacturing initiatives and some are less formal such as the RRRC providing public announcements on the availability to mitigation or recovery funding and offering grant writing assistance. The RRRC's Facebook page has a strong following due to its local news, public announcements and post frequency (near daily) and has nearly 1,000 followers. Through the Rendezvous Region Tourism Council's efforts, the RRRC has led the creation of a network of 100 small business members and a Facebook page with nearly 1,400 followers. Through these channels as well as through established relationships with regional Chambers of Commerce, the RRRC can broadly also connect with the small business community. The RRRC provides public announcements that are published in regional newspapers as well as direct mailings to local governments as needed. Finally, the RRRC has strong working relationships throughout the entire region on multiple fronts through ongoing engagement, project development/implementation, and a strong reputation on performance. These information networks have been very effective on multiple fronts including resiliency.

Due to the frequency of the natural disasters experienced in the region, the region's leaders have become well-versed in dealing with them. While it strains the local and regional resources to invest in disaster recovery, several areas have implemented permanent solutions to lessen the long-term burden on both resources and staff capacity. In extraordinary situations, such as the City of Northwood experiencing a drastic F-4 tornado, the RRRC provided project development, funding and grant management services for housing, demolition, and business development to assist with resiliency. These services often filled gaps left after the immediate impacts were dealt with and cleared away and the community developed its longer-term recovery strategies, convening appropriate partners, leveraging a variety of resources and moving recovery projects from ideas to full implementation. Often, the RRRC can apply its staff and leadership skillsets in a myriad of ways for both development as well as resiliency efforts.



## APPENDIX

### CEDS Committee

1. Chris Lipsh, City of Grafton & Red River Regional Council, CEDS Chairman
2. Mark Schill, Praxis Strategy Group, Facilitator
3. Michael Helt, First United Bank, Park River
4. Michael Duerre, ND Parks and Recreation Department – Icelandic State Park, Cavalier
5. Amy Whitney, Center for Innovation, UND, Grand Forks
6. Renee Shelton, Center for Innovation, UND, Grand Forks
7. Kristi Wilfahrt, Pembina Gorge Foundation, Walhalla
8. Kristy Jelinek, Unity Medical Center Foundation, Grafton
9. Harold Weimer, Cenex Harvest States, Drayton
10. David Korsmo, Northwood EDC
11. Nick Ziegelmann, City of Grafton
12. Mike Hanson, North Valley Career and Technology Center
13. Josie Lopez, Walsh County Social Services
14. Commissioner Lauren Wild, Walsh County & Red River Regional Council
15. Commissioner Cynthia Pic, Grand Forks County & Red River Regional Council
16. Mayor Dan Stenvold, City of Park River & Red River Regional Council
17. Mayor Lacey Hinkle, City of Cavalier & Red River Regional Council
18. Mayor Gerry Uglem, City of Northwood & Red River Regional Council
19. Steve Rehovsky, First United Bank and Park River EDC
20. Jon Markusen, KLJ
21. Sharon Lipsh, Walsh County Highway Department
22. Kathryn Kester, Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals
23. Mike Dunn, Construction Engineers & Red River Regional Council
24. Dawn Mandt, Red River Regional Council & Nelson County JDA & Pembina County JDA & Pembina Gorge Foundation
25. Stacie Sevigny, Red River Regional Council
26. Lori Estad, Red River Regional Council-
27. Cheryl Osowski, Red River Regional Council & Walsh and Pembina County Historic Preservation Commissions
28. Maggie Suda, Red River Regional Council & Pembina County JDA
29. Mary Morgan, Luscious Boutique, Grafton
30. Brent Nelson, Walsh County Emergency Management
31. Becca Bahnmler, Community Foundation of Grand Forks, East Grand Forks and Region
32. Barry Wilfahrt, The Chamber – GF and EGF
33. Jacob Suda, Northern States Insurance, Grafton
34. Bret Weber, Grand Forks Growth Fund & Red River Regional Council
35. Uma Hoffman, Motor Coach Industries, Pembina
36. Brandon Baumbach, Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation
37. Lynette Dickson, Center for Rural Health
38. Brad Gibbons, Center for Rural Health



## Board of Directors

1. Chris Lipsh, President – Local Development Corporations, Grafton
2. Cynthia Pic, Vice President – Grand Forks County Commission
3. Lauren Wild, Treasurer – Walsh County Commission
4. Dan Stenvold, Past President – Walsh County Mayors
5. Mary Houdek – Job Service North Dakota
6. Bret Weber – City of Grand Forks
7. Barry Wilfahrt – The Chamber of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks
8. Maynard Loibl – Nelson County Commission
9. Lacey Hinkle – Pembina County Mayors
10. Gerald Uglem – Grand Forks County Mayors
11. Todd Whitman – Nelson County Mayors
12. Nick Rutherford – Pembina County Mayors
13. Kristina Halverson – Pembina County Soil Conservation District
14. Korry Tweed – Nelson County Soil Conservation District
15. Greg Amundson – Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District
16. Mike Dunn – Advisory – Construction Engineers, Grand Forks
17. Gary Paulson – Advisory – Retired Banker, Park River
18. Shelley Popiel – Advisory – Walsh County Housing Authority
19. Phil Gerla – Advisory – University of North Dakota

## Staff

1. Dawn Mandt, Executive Director
2. Lori Estad, Office and Fiscal Manager
3. Stacie Sevigny, Developer
4. Maggie Suda, Developer
5. Cheryl Osowski, Special Projects Coordinator
6. Peyton Cole, Intern

## Northern Valley Youth Entrepreneurship Summary



**PURPOSE:**

*Cultivate a new, innovative and highly skilled workforce and entrepreneurship pool by helping strengthen partnerships between the business community, schools, educators, students and parents. Exposing students to an array of entrepreneurship and career opportunities in the Northern Red River Valley to help retain population.*

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Retain youth/millennials in our rural communities.
- Strengthen relationships between students, schools, local businesses and manufacturers.
- Expose youth in grades 3 through 12 to the wide variety of entrepreneurship and career opportunities available in rural northeastern ND.
- Increase awareness of early career exposure events and programs among parents, educators and community leaders.



## Marketplace for Kids (Grades 3-8)

Marketplace for Kids exposes students in grades three through eight to a broad range of careers. Throughout the day, students attend five, 25-minute classes led by area business owners and community service providers. Sample classes include: Think Like an Architect, Write & Illustrate Your Own Book, Careers in Manufacturing, and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS).

The event rotates annually between Cavalier and Grafton. In 2018, more than 1,000 people participated in the fifth annual event which included 85 business projects presented by 5th grade student entrepreneurs at the Hall of Great Ideas Showcase.



## Youth Entrepreneur Camp (Grades 3-6)

Youth Entrepreneur Camp is a four-day summer camp for grades 3-6 held in Grafton and Cavalier. Young entrepreneurs become business owners and learn how to build a successful business. The students develop their own community and currency, run their own town and turn their great ideas into money making businesses. They also learn how to shoot commercials using iPads.



PAGE 2

## Manufacturing Day (Grade 7)

The Pembina County JDA, Walsh County JDA and North Valley Career and Technology Center (NVCTC) joined forces to plan the first Youth Manufacturing Day (MFG DAY) event held in 2016. Manufacturing is one of the leading employers in both counties, providing more than 1,200 jobs. MFG DAY was implemented with the goal of helping change the perception of the manufacturing industry and inspire next-generation workers to pursue a career in modern manufacturing, while also retaining workforce in our rural communities.

MFG DAY is held annually in October. Up to 13 schools and more than 200 seventh grade students from Walsh, Pembina and northern Grand Forks Counties visit two manufacturing businesses. The students hear personal stories from young ambassadors who share their modern perspectives on the industry and how they have found great careers in manufacturing. Tours of the manufacturing facilities are also given.

Past and present participating manufacturing businesses from Walsh and Pembina Counties include American Crystal Sugar (Drayton), Bordertown Retail Systems (Neche), Food First (Walhalla), Harriston Industries (Minto), Kringstad Ironworks/Safe-T-Pull (Park River), Marvin Windows and Doors (Grafton), Midwest Fabrication (Grafton), Morgan Printing (Grafton), Motor Coach Industries (Pembina), Rimco (Neche) and Woodside Industries (Cavalier).



PAGE 3



## Explore NVCTC (Grade 8)

Explore NVCTC (North Valley Career and Technology Center) was initiated in 2015 and exposes 8<sup>th</sup> grade students to career and technology courses and educates them about the direct application and skill requirements for starting and growing a business. A motivational speaker (like Brooks Harper) kicks off the day followed by four, 25-minute breakout sessions led by NVCTC staff and area business leaders.



## Northern Valley Career Expo (Grade 10)

The first Northern Valley Career Expo was held in 2012 in Grand Forks. It is held annually in October and is attended by approximately 1,500 10<sup>th</sup> grade students from 35 area high schools.

The main objective is to expose students to regional employment opportunities, including educational and training paths to the great careers in our area. In addition to 22 occupational breakout sessions, this event provides a venue for regional employers/ educational providers to interact directly with students by showcasing career opportunities at their business. Businesses feature hands-on exhibits and connect with students. Students have close to an hour to explore the exhibits and visit with employers and educational/training institutions that attend.



PAGE 4



## Cooperative Work Experience (Grades 11-12)



North Valley Career and Technology Center (NVCTC) in Grafton offers high school students cooperative work experience for credit. Work based learning experience provides real-time career exploration opportunities for students.

Students enrolled in the program must be a junior or senior who have completed a CTE course and must commit to working a minimum of two to three days a week. Placements can be one semester or a full year.

This program benefits students, employers, and the community.

### Student Benefits:

- Develop work-related competencies.
- Improve employability.
- Motivation to stay in school/improved grades.
- Increase awareness of nontraditional career opportunities.

### Employer Benefits:

- Pool of skilled and motivated potential future employees and/or succession planning.
- Involvement in the curriculum development process.
- Improved employee retention and reduced training/recruitment costs.

### Community Benefits:

- Creating an environment of collaboration and cooperation among the school, employers, and the community.
- Encouraging respect, tolerance, and understanding among different groups.
- Contributing to building a more productive local economy.
- Fostering confidence in the school system as practical and beneficial results are observed.
- Encourages students to remain in the community.

The chart below reflects event participation from 2017/2018. The schools that participate in each program may vary from year to year.

School District	County	Marketplace for Kids	Youth Entrepreneur Camp	MFG DAY	Explore NVCTC	Northern Valley Career Expo	Cooperative Work Experience
Emerado	Grand Forks				•		
Marvel	Grand Forks	•		•	•		
Midway	Grand Forks	•		•	•	•	
Northwood	Grand Forks				•	•	
St. Michael's Catholic School	Grand Forks	•					
Thompson	Grand Forks				•	•	
Larimore	Nelson				•	•	
Cavalier	Pembina	•	•	•	•		•
Drayton	Pembina	•	•	•	•	•	•
North Border - Pembina	Pembina	•	•	•	•	•	•
North Border - Walhalla	Pembina	•	•	•	•	•	•
St. Thomas	Pembina	•	•	•	•		•
Valley-Edinburg	Pembina/Walsh	•	•	•	•	•	•
Edmore	Ramsey	•		•	•		
Finley-Sharon	Steele				•	•	
Hope-Page	Steele				•		
Central Valley	Traill				•		
Hatton	Traill				•	•	
Hillsboro	Traill				•		
Fordville-Lankin	Walsh	•		•	•		
Grafton	Walsh	•	•	•	•	•	•
Minto	Walsh	•	•	•	•	•	•
Park River	Walsh	•	•	•	•	•	•

For more information, please contact:

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Julie Campbell, Walsh County JDA / [jkcampbe@nd.gov](mailto:jkcampbe@nd.gov) / 701-352-2171