

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In 1984, the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) under the provisions of Title IV of the Public Works and Economic Development Act of 1965, as amended. The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) provides financial assistance to designated districts for the purpose of developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and provides funding, in part, for community development planning that is designed to assist in alleviating economic distress and unemployment.

The CEDS document is a significant component of remaining a designated EDD. Continued eligibility of the East Central Economic Development District is based upon the Commission completing an update of the CEDS, in conformance with 13 CFR Chapter III §303.7, every 5 years, and submitting a supplemental annual report for all other years. This ensures that communities within the region remain eligible for EDA funding programs.

Since gaining EDD status in 1984, the Commission has been successful in securing over \$9.7 million in EDA funding for projects throughout the region. By continually updating the CEDS, the Commission ensures that communities within the region remain eligible for EDA funding to use in leveraging additional private and public sector investment. A summary of EDA programs is listed below:

- ***Economic Adjustment Program*** predominantly supports three types of grant activities for strategic planning, project implementation, and revolving loan funds. Activities may include creation/expansion of strategically targeted business development and business financing programs, construction of infrastructure improvements, and industry research and analysis.
- ***Short-term Planning Grants*** assist in economic development planning and implementation, multi-jurisdictional efforts, and programs designed to create and retain permanent jobs and increase incomes.
- ***Technical Assistance Program*** grants often support feasibility studies on potential projects such as industrial parks and business incubators, or for the development of revitalization or tourism plans.
- ***Public Works Program*** supports locally developed projects targeting long term economic self sufficiency. Examples of past projects include infrastructure investments that improved or provided water or sewer facilities, rail spurs, and technology related infrastructure.

The preparation of the 2008 CEDS effort was led by an ad-hoc advisory committee, termed the CEDS Strategy Committee. This committee consisted of representatives from a variety of backgrounds, including: private sector, public officials, community leaders, workforce development boards, institutions of higher education, private individuals, and tribal government. The committee assisted Commission staff in disseminating background information, future projections, and the results of a qualitative economic development SWOT survey, which

assessed perceptions of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to economic development. The survey garnered the following results:

Current Strengths:

- Quality of Life
- Traditional Infrastructure
- Intra-Regional Proximity
- Education (k-12)
- Geographic Location
- Work Ethic
- Workforce Availability
- Environment & Natural Resources
- Recreation
- Regional Collaborations
- Affordability

Current Weakness:

- Educational Attainment
- Higher Education (PhD, Professional)
- Research & Development
- Image & Promotion
- Access to Risk Capital
- Parochialism
- Culture
- Entrepreneurial Support
- Lack of Diversity
- New Infrastructure (aging)
- High State & Local Taxes
- Mismatch Between Skills & Jobs
- Poor Planning/Urban Sprawl

Future Opportunities:

- Regional Assets
- Global Markets
- Collaboration
- Agricultural Diversification
- Green Economy
- Cluster/Supply Chain Development
- Strengthen Rail & Transit
- Support Existing Industry

Future Threats:

- Global Competition
- Aging Population & Workforce
- Aging of Infrastructure
- Brain Drain
- Provincial Culture
- Per Capita Income Trends/Poverty
- Manufacturing Dependence
- High Fuel Costs
- Mismanagement of Natural Resources

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION & GOALS

The CEDS sets forth a vision for economic development, as well as a set of associated goals needed to help attain this vision. The regional vision statement, first adopted as part of the 2003 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and since reaffirmed in the 2008 CEDS and the East Central Wisconsin Regional Comprehensive Plan, is intended to guide the planning process toward the desired future of the region. The vision statement created for the region is as follows:

“The East Central Region has diversified employment opportunities including well paid knowledge based jobs. The regional economy benefits from advances in research and technology, and supports entrepreneurialism and local business ownership. The region conducts collaborative economic development efforts across jurisdictional boundaries of governments, educational institutions, and other economic development entities. The preservation of natural resource amenities supports tourism opportunities, assists in attracting an educated workforce and enhances the quality of place for residents in the region.”

Although twenty-three goals are presented in the document, the CEDS Strategy Committee indicated that the following five goals were of highest priority:

- **GOAL:** Promote the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities.
- **GOAL:** Work to promote a positive, growth oriented image to attract businesses and to foster an entrepreneurially supportive environment.
- **GOAL:** Evaluate the potential for the overall modernization, customization, and component manufacturing opportunities within the region.
- **GOAL:** More effectively link and apply research and development (R&D) and technology to production processes.
- **GOAL:** Encourage partnerships between the public and private sector to identify skills and knowledge needed for emerging jobs.

COLLABORATION & PLAN OF ACTION

The Commission recognizes that advancing regional economic development requires collaboration amongst a variety of organizations/stakeholders. With this in mind, the Commission sets forth a plan of action that outlines specific tasks the Commission staff should undertake to help achieve the regional vision for economic development, as guided by the following principles (as required by 13 CFR Chapter III §303.7(8)):

- Promote economic development and opportunity;
- Foster effective transportation access;
- Enhance and protect the environment;
- Maximize effective development and use of the workforce;
- Promote the use of technology in economic development, including access to high-speed telecommunications;
- Balance resources through sound management of physical development; and
- Obtain and utilize adequate funds and other resources.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Economic development projects listed within the CEDS are made eligible to apply for EDA funding programs. Each year, East Central distributes a Project Inventory Survey to gather information about future projects at the local and regional level pertaining to planning, community and economic development, and capital and public works improvement. The questionnaire asks communities to provide a list of economic development projects for the next three years. A total of 81 projects were submitted as part of the 2008 inventory. The following provides a breakdown of project types:

Development /Redevelopment – Commercial, Downtown, TIF:	21.3%
Transportation:	18.8%
Community Facilities:	16.3%
Industrial/Business Park Development/Redevelopment:	16.3%
Utility Projects (water, sewer, electric, or stormwater):	11.3%
Planning	10.0%

Business Assistance/Development (RLF, Entrepreneurs): 6.3%
100.0%

Each project listed in the inventory was assessed and categorized using a set of criteria developed by staff, with the assistance of the CEDS Strategy Committee. The purpose of the criteria, scored out of 60 points, is to assist the Commission in targeting resources where they will be most beneficial and in line with EDA funding guidelines. In 2008, the highest scoring project was the College of Menominee Nation's Forest Industry Innovation Center, receiving 54 points.

The CEDS Strategy Committee, in cooperation with East Central Staff, also developed several regional projects they believe are valuable to improving the regional economy. As these projects are in early stages of development, they are listed to guide future actions taken by the Committee, with the hope that some will reach the point where they are ready to pursue EDA funding. Potential regional initiatives, as identified in 2008, are listed below:

- Entrepreneurial League;
- Paper/Forest Products Sector Study/Plan of Action;
- Business Incubator, based on Racine Model;
- Green Industries Assessment/Study; and
- Assessing the Impact of Immigration and its impact on the regional economy.