



2024 ANNUAL REPORT



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A Message from Our CEO

CEDA has come a long way since our founding in 1986. What started largely as a grant writing agency connecting federal dollars to small towns in southeast Minnesota has grown into a multi-state organization focused on business development, strategic planning, and more. As interest in CEDA's services continues to grow, so does our team. While this growth is exciting, it has also shown the need for some internal progression.

In 2024 our leadership determined that it was time to reorganize our management structure to better support our staff and communities. To start, we hired CEDA's very first human resources manager, Teri Root. Teri has been redesigning our administrative processes for hiring, onboarding, and supporting our 51 team members.

Next, we announced new executive leadership: CEDA's new Chief Mission Officer, Courtney Bergey Swanson and Chief Operations Officer, James Hanke. Their passion for rural economic development is an asset to our organization and the communities we serve. With their and Teri's help, we thoughtfully reworked our organizational structure to better serve our growing team and offer a transparent framework for internal career progression. Regional Manager positions were added and departments were clearly defined to better support our team and the work they do. These positions were filled in the fall and while this framework is still new, these changes have already proven to be a positive step forward for our organization.

Throughout our continued growth and development, the impact our CEDA team has had on the communities that we serve is undeniable. In 2024, the CEDA team successfully authored 89 grants that brought in a total of \$9,709,993.36 for our communities and partner organizations. I invite you to read our annual report to find out more about what our team has accomplished this year.

As we reflect on the successful year of 2024, we must take a moment to pause to appreciate the contributions that three former CEDA Board Members have made to our organization and our region. Bill Rohe, Larry Anderson and Mike Tuohy have passed recently. These three were serving on the CEDA Emeritus Board at the time of their passing. Cumulatively, they served on the CEDA Board of Directors for almost 50 years. Their dedication to CEDA and to rural America will forever be remembered. CEDA would not be where it is today without Bill, Larry and Mike. We miss their input but we will carry on the great work in their memory.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to see what 2025 brings for CEDA. Changes are inevitable for a growing organization, but our commitment to bettering rural communities has never wavered.

Thank you for all that you do!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Leeb". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "L".

2024 Community Highlights

Arlington, MN Pop. 2,247

- Received a Hotel Study through a program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. We were selected for this program and worked with a group of students to collect information from the city and various organizations, business owners, and residents.
- Assisted the EDA with approving various loans through their sign loan program, facade loan program, and residential rehab program.
- EDA sold 22 acres of land for \$300,000+, and funds will be used for future EDA projects and programs.

Benson, MN Pop. 3,480

- Facilitated the development of 22 housing units in Phase III of a multi-phase, market-rate housing development on a formerly vacant city-owned site.
- Administered over \$196,000 in revolving loans to assist in the creation of three local businesses.
- Facilitated the sale of two city-owned properties in the newly created mixed use zone, with both having plans of development for future business use to include a coffee shop expansion and event center.

Blue Earth, MN Pop. 3,174

- Implemented a monthly Lunch and Learn series for our businesses that focuses topics like ChatGPT, Canva, Google, and many other topics.
- Collaborated with the University of Minnesota Extension to bring the Vetcamp experience to students in Blue Earth and surrounding schools in an effort to bring more attention to the need for rural veterinarians.
- Worked with First Children's Finance to get a gap analysis and deeper understanding of the childcare shortage in Blue Earth and ways we can continue to support current providers and attract new.

Cannon Falls, MN Pop. 4,220

- Construction of the EDA-owned Hardwood Estates housing development was completed in late September. 19 single family lots and 10 twin home lots were for sale; at the end of 2024, only eight twin home lots and two single family lots remained without some type of contract pending. The others were sold or had closing dates pending. Phase II will begin in 2025.
- The City was awarded an Active Transportation Planning Assistance Grant from MnDOT which was a community process to create a plan to make the community more walkable and bikeable for residents. The final draft was delivered in December.
- Assisted the Cannon Falls Fire Department with authoring six grants that resulted in \$77,700 in funds allocated towards necessary equipment replacement.

Chatfield, MN Pop. 2,997

- Promoted and assisted the Alliance in increasing the size of the Growers' Market to more than 40 members, 20 weekly tents, and a distinctive increase in food vendors.
- Promoted the waiving of utility hook-up fees to incentivize housing development and look to continue this into 2025.
- Received a \$475,000 Workforce Housing Grant to add 14 affordable apartment units, which a greatly needed in the community.

Cold Spring, MN Pop. 4,164

- Hosted an informational session to build a bridge and clear up misconceptions between the local building inspector and builders, contractors, and business owners.
- Continued monitoring and implementing the Main Street Revitalization Grant for local businesses in the downtown area.
- Strengthened the relationship between the City, local businesses and the Chamber through different events, business visits, and various marketing efforts.

Coleraine, MN Pop. 2,006

- Coordinated the funding, facilitated the group of community members in determining the design and coordinated the volunteer build (more than 40 volunteers) for the installation of a replacement playground at Cotton Park.
- Facilitated grant reimbursement requests and final grant reports supporting the local recreation association arena/facility roof replacement project.
- Initiated a community volunteer group who will meet monthly to plan and implement community events and other community development projects throughout the year.



Dawson, MN Pop. 1,466

- Administered a \$25,000 revolving loan to assist in the improvements of a local business to allow it to expand its offered services.
- Developed a new program to provide forgivable loans to businesses interested in commercial building improvements, with a total of \$72,000 awarded to three businesses.
- Utilized Prime West Grant funding to implement a program ultimately providing 23 swimming lessons and 11 pool pass scholarships to community members.

Dodge County, MN Pop. 20,867

- Awarded \$200,000 from the MPCA Sustainable Building & Materials Management Grant to make building improvements to the Renovation ReUse Center which aims to reduce the amount of tonnage of solid waste going into landfills. This will allow the building to operate year round.
- Coordinated three free training sessions for up to 40 child care professionals and also provided them dinner, snacks and opportunity to network with one another. Licensed child care providers must complete annual training to maintain their license. The training helps ensure that providers keep up with health and safety standards and continue to develop their professional skills.
- Restoration Park opened at the end of September after three years of planning, preparation and planting. This property was transformed from a 30+ acre farmland/woodland area to a natural recreational park. All of the funding has been through multiple grant sources, donations and in-kind donations.

Ellendale, MN Pop. 676

- Initiated a comprehensive inventory of vacant buildings to strategically market and attract potential businesses to the community.
- Reviewed and disbursed \$10,000 in Revolving Loan Funds; worked to increase awareness of the program among local businesses seeking funding for improvements.
- Collaborating with the school to explore a Safe Routes to School program, addressing key safety challenges, and considering grants for safety improvements.

Eyota, MN Pop. 2,006

- EDA staff worked with a housing developer to uncover financial tools to create 42 new units of workforce and single family homes. Financial tools included a one million dollar zero percent loan, and a seven year tax abatement. Eyota provided data for the Maxfield Housing Study update.
- Assisted the grocery store with \$30,000 in Revolving Loan Funds and a loan used to attract a chiropractor was satisfied. Los Corrales opened utilizing a \$10,000 facade loan to grant program.
- Received funding from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Small Town Grant program for 2025 activities, received a donation from the new local bank, assisted with the playground, farmers market, and for their beautification project for housing along Highway 14.

Faribault County, MN Pop. 13,921

- Hosted the Faribault and Martin Counties Tour of Manufacturing in partnership with the Martin County EDA, connecting over 130 students and attendees to ten area manufacturers.
- Developed a local housing trust fund to utilize the Statewide Affordable Housing Aid allocation of \$181,054.
- Coordinated several meetings of the I-90 Network to address housing needs in Faribault and Martin Counties, including discussions on local challenges, opportunities, and insights from developers.

Fillmore County, MN Pop. 21,228

- Facilitated the continued growth and expansion of the Bluff Country Collaborative to eight member schools focused on career path development and experiential learning opportunities for more than 1,700 high school students in Fillmore & Houston Counties and surrounding communities.
- Connected multiple farm-based businesses in Fillmore County to agricultural resources and funding through Fillmore County events like 2024 Fillmore County Agriculture Summit, and programs like CEDA's Rural Business Innovation Lab.
- Facilitated the expansion of the Root River Trail Towns public Bike Rental program to Spring Valley. The Root River Trail bike rentals are possible through Fillmore County Public Health and the Minnesota State Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP).

Floodwood, MN Pop. 517

- Held brainstorming sessions with community members and high school students to identify projects and create a community priority list for the City Council.
- Assisted in authoring two grants for a total of \$91,000 to help fund a new playground and impact the community in 2025.
- Participated in the Housing Institute Committee through Minnesota Housing to identify local housing needs.

Goodhue County, MN Pop. 47,582

- Assisted with the County building permit reimbursement program - since its inception in 2020, 332 single family units and 256 multi-family housing units have been constructed. Participated with SEMMCHRA for their Bring it Home program that created new housing and provided critical preservation in Kenyon and Cannon Falls.
- Participated in the Goodhue County Housing Committee that brought together regional housing stakeholders to discuss housing obstacles, opportunities, and programs and authored two applications for funding to assist in updating the housing study.
- Organized and hosted the 2024 Goodhue County EDA Summit that brought together industry professionals and government officials to discuss ongoing and future projects in the County and each of the communities within the County.

Goodhue, MN Pop. 1,250

- Spearheaded the transformation of two community tennis courts into four modern pickleball courts.
- Revamped the composition of the Economic Development Authority (EDA) by transitioning from an exclusive city council structure to a transparent process, enabling the inclusion of three dedicated at-large residents alongside two council members.
- Implemented tax incentives for two local businesses through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and Tax Abatement programs.

Goodview, MN Pop. 4,158

- Authored two grants, totaling \$27,599, including the Taylor Rural Improvements grant to remove two feet of murky sand out of the swimming beach at Michael LaCanne Memorial Park and replace it with one foot of dredged river sand and a Minnesota Department of Safety grant for a firearms safe.
- Assisted in the creation of a TIF District, which prompted the sale of 1.5 acres of EDA land to KickAss Jerky Company for their business expansion.
- Created and implemented a new business incentive program called the Business Assistance and Improvement Program.

Harmony, MN Pop. 1,043

- The groundbreaking Harmony-Preston Valley Bike Trail Phase II took place, marking an important milestone for the decades-long project involving many hardworking community members.
- \$100,000 in Revolving Loan Funds administered to Harmony business owners.
- Two new homes were built utilizing Harmony's Home Rebate Program.

Hayfield, MN Pop. 1,364

- Hayfield Grocery and Hardware Store was in need of funding to save the building's roof and keep the business open; the EDA provided a \$75,000 low interest loan and the city was able to provide a \$30,000 forgivable loan to ensure project success.
- Finalized and adopted the city's first Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan.
- Awarded and completed the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School Design Assistance Grant Program which has provided a final plan and budget for the city to use to apply for a future round of the program's Infrastructure Grant program to pay for the improvements. Program value of more than \$40,000.

Hill City, MN Pop. 613

- Assisted the parks and recreation committee to create a strategic plan to improve the campground area in 2025.
- Helped with funding, design, and install of an electronic billboard messaging board.
- Created and maintained a community events calendar and market on social media platforms.

Houston County, MN Pop. 18,843

- Continued to work with stakeholders to address childcare needs in Houston County. This included creating a Houston County Childcare Facilities Grant for new and existing providers helping to create 10 new childcare slots and retain 121 slots thus far.
- Administered three EDA loans to local businesses for property acquisition, building renovations, and equipment. The projects created three full time jobs, and helped retain 15 jobs.
- Established a Houston County Housing Core Team in partnership with Houston County Public Health and Human Services to address housing needs.

Howard County Business & Tourism, IA Pop. 9,469

- CEDA staff managed the first year of the new Childcare Solutions Program aimed at retaining and recruiting workforce for childcare facilities in Howard County. An Iowa state grant of \$233,800 was distributed to child care workers at three facilities in Howard County and 20 children were removed from waitlists, while an additional \$133,075 of local funds were also raised.
- CEDA staff met with twenty-seven entrepreneurs and supplied \$162,250 in new revolving loan funds creating and retaining a total of 38 jobs in 2024, bringing the current total amount of funds in circulation with Howard County businesses to \$1,169,350.
- With continued focus on creating more housing options, the Howard County Housing Revolving Loan Fund loaned \$185,000 opening thirteen new units while the CUSB Bank Historic Downtown Cresco Revolving Loan Fund loaned \$135,000 generating three new units.

Itasca County, MN Pop. 45,014

- Secured over \$325,000 in grant funding for communities and townships for a variety of projects.
- Coordinated with United Way to implement a Day of Action for the City of Keewatin with over 125 volunteers working on almost two dozen projects.
- Continued administration of the Small Cities Development Program for the City of Nashwauk, which has a total of 20 residential and six commercial rehabilitation projects with a total of \$816,500 in grant funds.

Kenyon, MN Pop. 1,894

- Revised the Facade Improvement Program application and the EDA approved over \$16,000 in grants to local businesses for exterior building improvements.
- Advanced an active transportation initiative aimed at creating safer walking and biking routes connecting all parts of the community to Depot Park, the community pool, the school, and downtown businesses, guided by community survey results.
- Introduced and actively moving forward with the EDA and the community to unite residents and resources to address its most critical needs through the creation of a community foundation.



Lake Crystal, MN Pop. 2,539

- Created a business survey that was sent to every business in the city to gather input regarding the local business climate and suggestions for the direction of EDA assistance.
- Held meetings with local housing developers regarding city lots and incentives. The meeting led to a current project as directed by our EDA board, which is exploring the development of a tax abatement program.
- Within the first few weeks of entering the contract, scheduled 10 business visits with local businesses.

Lanesboro, MN Pop. 724

- EDA staff authored and were awarded a \$100,000 USDA grant to recapitalize the Revolving Loan Fund, there are four clients lined up to tap into the funding. Staff wrote and were awarded a \$20,000 grant to expand capacity/staffing to support entrepreneur growth within the community.
- Compeer funds were awarded to study the land value of city-owned property along the river, a site for potential housing. The church to rental housing project was completed resulting in 10 new rental apartments in the city.
- EDA staff developed a three-year strategic work plan.

LeRoy, MN Pop. 957

- Secured a \$10,000 grant from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation to develop a pocket park on Main Street.
- Created and implemented a microloan program to support local businesses affected by the Highway 56 construction.
- Assisted in securing and administering \$80,000 in emergency relief funds from Mower County for LeRoy businesses impacted by the Highway 56 construction project.

Le Sueur, MN Pop. 4,213

- Conveyed and sold 150 acres of EDA-owned land for business expansion on Highway-169.
- Facilitated tax increment financing for the creation of 34 new single-family homes within city limits.
- Assisted in the opening of Le Sueur-Henderson middle school, a \$40 million project completed in July, 2024.

Lewiston, MN Pop. 1,533

- Created and implemented a new business incentive program, Demolition Grant Program, promoting rehabilitation of the Lewiston Downtown District.
- Promoted and assisted with the sale of three dilapidated downtown businesses to LT Construction, promoting downtown revitalization.
- Authored four successful grant applications totaling \$49,044, including: the MN Department of Public Safety's ARMER grant program to purchase radios to facilitate communication during emergencies; the Taylor Family Farms Foundation grant to purchase CPR Lucas Machine for the Ambulance Department; MiEnergy/Dairyland Power Cooperative for city banners; and Winona County's Community Health Partnership for park signs.

Madelia, MN Pop. 2,396

- Authored and was awarded \$99,000 through the USDA Rural Business Development Grant Program to increase the revolving loan pool for city businesses.
- Facilitated the development of a countywide housing rehabilitation program funded through the Statewide Affordable Housing Aid allocation of \$174,258.
- Hosted an Entrepreneur Roundtable of six local entrepreneurs to share real-world insights with attendees, foster connections, and inspire future business ventures.

Mantorville, MN Pop. 1,111

- Received \$20,000 from the Taylor Family Farm Foundation to go toward new tornado sirens for the city.
- A new bandshell was constructed in Riverside Park with support from community donors, businesses and organizations from the area, which will host a multitude of events from music, theater and other events to attract people to town. A \$5,000 grant from Compeer Financial contributed to the flood study to ensure the feasibility of the project.
- Received \$10,000 from Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Small Town Grant to purchase new decorative banners to hang on the new lamp posts in downtown after the highway reconstruction project of 2024.

Mapleton, MN Pop. 1,710

- Authored and was awarded \$25,000 in grant funding from Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation to support entrepreneur programming efforts within the community.
- Completed a comprehensive childcare study to address shortcomings and create roadmap funding for a new childcare center.
- Created a new comprehensive plan addressing facilities, housing, sustainability, and economic development.

Martin County, MN Pop. 20,025

- Hosted a Tour of Manufacturing in partnership with the Faribault County EDA, connecting over 130 students and attendees to 10 area manufacturers.
- Hosted Business Succession and Transition Workshop.
- Secured \$25,000 in funds from Taylor Family Farms Foundation Grant For Sherburn Playground Project.

Murdock, MN Pop. 306

- Authored the ARMER Grant and was awarded \$40,000 for new radios for the Murdock Fire Department.
- Authored and awarded \$25,000 from the Swift County Community Recreation and Tourism Grant to update City Hall public restrooms, replace the City sign with a new illuminated design and improve landscaping around the sign.
- Facilitated a collaboration meeting between the Murdock Area Community Club and the City to discuss ideas for the future in Making Murdock Better campaign to create a more bonded community.

Nobles County, MN Pop. 22,290

- Awarded \$34,255.40 in funding to support both new and existing child care providers operating in Nobles County, strengthening local child care capacity.
- Enhanced child care provider support by hosting a Super Saturday training and appreciation event. Additionally, organized five Provider+Kids community events, including securing funding for bus transportation.
- Launched the Nobles County Emergency Child Care Subsidy Program, offering vital financial assistance to parents in need of emergency support for child care expenses.

Northome, MN Pop. 155

- Researched designs of several examples and created a preliminary of city website, preparing for redesign.
- Connected city municipal on/off liquor store with SBDC consultant for ongoing business consulting services.
- Updated Google Maps with local amenities and correct locations to enhance/improve visitor google searches for area amenities.

Oronoco, MN Pop. 1,802

- Facilitated a Community Engagement project which took place throughout the first half of the year and included a community-wide survey and in-person event with a SWOT analysis to determine the needs, wants, and desires of the community regarding all aspects of the community. A report of all of the results from the engagement process, along with recommendations for moving forward, was completed and is available on the city's website.
- The development and implementation of By-Laws for the city's Economic Development Authority were completed at the start of 2024, offering guidance on processes and procedures for the Oronoco EDA and its future activities.
- Applied for and was awarded a \$10,000 Small Town Grant from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation to begin a Community Branding Process. RFP's have been released and firm selection is expected to take place in March of 2025.

Pelican Rapids, MN Pop. 2,577

- Awarded \$948,750 in grant funds from the Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) to low- and moderate-income owner-occupied housing and commercial projects to rehabilitate, improve, repair, or increase energy efficiency in the form of a forgivable loan.
- Authored and awarded \$25,000 in grant funds to match local dollars to start a \$50,000 locally administered Commercial Rehab Program.
- Authored and was awarded \$27,000 in grant funds from the USDA Community Facilities Program for a new city maintenance vehicle.

Pine Island, MN Pop. 3,769

- The City finalized the sale of excess right-of-way to Prairie Island Indian Community for \$1.5 million. The City Council, with input from staff, will discuss how best to utilize these funds.
- Hosted a Housing Summit, in cooperation with other Rochester Area Economic Development, Inc. communities, to discuss what our cities have available to developers and hear from developers on what they need from cities.
- Completed a hotel feasibility study which indicated a positive outcome for a hotel. Staff continues to work to find a developer for the project.

Plainview, MN Pop. 3,527

- Authored and was awarded \$20,000 from Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Activating our Entrepreneurial Ecosystem program to build relationships with local businesses and connect them with the assistance they need, including information and trainings.
- Hosted "The Business of Childcare" meetings with Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation to identify solutions to childcare shortages.
- Promoted Plainview Business Center to welcome and support new businesses.

Preston, MN Pop. 1,324

- Created and introduced mission, vision, and values statements to provide direction for 2024 strategic planning.
- Authored and was awarded over \$104,000 in grant funds from the USDA Rural Energy for America Program for Preston Dairy and Farm Association to install a solar array.
- Marketed and organized four public brainstorming sessions, generating innovative ideas like the new "Mistletoe Market" and the "Follow the Trout Route" project, which was awarded \$25,000 in grant funding from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation/Taylor Foundation Rural Improvements Grant.



Remer, MN Pop. 391

- Assisted in authoring an \$80,000 grant to cover a new community coordinator position and make improvements to a historic building in 2025.
- Facilitated two community conversations and five high school conversations to help identify community development projects and priorities.
- Completed a first impression report on the city to help identify community strengths and needed improvements.

Rushford Village, MN Pop. 790

- Awarded and completed the Minnesota DOT's Safe Routes to School Design Assistance Grant Program which has provided a final plan and budget for the city to use to apply for a future round of the program's Infrastructure Grant program to pay for the improvements. Program value of more than \$40,000.
- Applied for and received a \$13,200 Taylor Rural Improvements Grant for the purpose of purchasing a new ADA compliant merry-go-round and surfacing to replace the older existing merry-go-round at the city park.
- Comprehensive Plan update is ongoing.

Spring Grove, MN Pop. 1,256

- Received a \$695,000 library construction grant from the Minnesota Department of Education as part of a vision to create a new library and community center on the site of the tragic 2022 downtown fire.
- Supported the successful transition of the beloved Spring Grove Cinema to a new owner, keeping the space open as a movie theater and expanding programming to include a student union, coffee shop, and special programming. The Spring Grove EDA provided \$25,000 gap financing and a \$2,000 startup grant for the project.
- Awarded and completed the Minnesota DOT's Safe Routes to School Design Assistance Grant Program which has provided a final plan and budget for the city to use to apply for a future round of the program's Infrastructure Grant program to pay for the improvements. Program value of more than \$40,000.

Spring Valley, MN Pop. 2,447

- Coordinated with Spring Valley Public Library and the CEDA Grants Department, who successfully authored a MN. Dept. of Education Library Construction Grant, securing \$146,850 in funding for library renovations.
- Secured \$15,000 in grant funding through Compeer Financial and the National Association of Realtors to facilitate Comprehensive Housing Assessment, which will be used to inform and develop housing initiatives.
- Coordinated with the City Council, Planning and Zoning, and SAFEbuilt, Inc. to successfully implement updated Zoning Ordinances and Building Permit and Inspection requirements per the MN State Building Code, including the development and implementation of online Planning and Zoning resources through the www.Springvalleyeda.org website.

St. Charles, MN Pop. 3,390

- Applied to five grants for the City. Authored and was awarded \$18,770 in grant funds for new streetlight banners, a hotel feasibility study, and a comprehensive plan for the City.
- Administered \$30,000 in forgivable loans for three commercial restoration projects which will have combined improvements of over \$200,000.
- Assisted a local business in the redevelopment of a downtown building with the creation of a TIF District.

Viroqua Chamber/City of Viroqua, WI Pop. 4,437

- Provided Executive Director staffing for the combined Viroqua Chamber of Commerce, Viroqua Main St., and Explore Viroqua.
- Received re-accreditation as a Wisconsin Main St. Community.
- Supported the City's Hanson Farm Development project by coordinating MOU's and Development Agreements with four developers who will create 100 new housing units in the community.

Wabasha, MN Pop. 2,559

- Created and implemented a new business incentive program and Facade Improvement Program for the Wabasha Port Authority.
- Created a business directory for the City and Port Authority.
- Port Authority staff assisted the City with three grants to support housing development for a total of \$5 million in grant awards. Two of the awards support the creation of a 50-unit apartment building in the downtown. Staff supports the community housing committee who as volunteers are working alongside the City to accomplish their 2023 housing study goals.

Washburn County, WI Pop. 16,930

- Developed a fundraising campaign to support the public/private partnership for the Washburn County EDC.
- Reactivated County investment and engagement in the EDC.
- Coordinated a County-wide Housing Study.
- Developed the framework for Washburn County EDC to become a part of the first WI Rural Entrepreneurial Ventures cohort.

West Concord, MN Pop. 861

- Revised the Facade Improvement Program application and guidelines, set to launch in 2025.
- Initiated discussions with multiple developers, guided by the 2023 feasibility report, to explore potential incentives for diverse housing projects.
- Led efforts to support local businesses by offering resources to enhance their online presence and fostering partnerships with the school district to attract skilled workers for both current and future needs.

Winnebago, MN Pop. 1,391

- Authored and was awarded a \$120,000 grant from the Blandin Foundation which was used to create an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program.
- Authored and was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Taylor Family Farms Foundation to help purchase new turnout gear for the Winnebago Fire Department.
- Created and implemented a Business Retention and Expansion program.

Winona County, MN Pop. 49,671

- Administered two EDA loans totaling \$450,000 to Winona County Businesses.
- Collaborated with Winona County municipalities, HKGi and LOCi consultants, and the Winona County Board to complete a 2024 Housing Study.
- Completed a 2024 Farmers' Market Food Hub Feasibility study with the University of Minnesota and WINONA County SHIP.

Zumbrota, MN Pop. 3,726

- Administered an EDA loan of \$129,800 to aid in the relocation and expansion of a veterinarian clinic in Zumbrota, keeping the business local.
- Coordinated with the CEDA Grants Department, who authored a Minnesota Workforce Housing Grant totaling \$2,800,000 for the construction of a new 38-unit market-rate apartment building located in downtown Zumbrota.
- With the assistance of Explore Minnesota, collaborated with the local newspaper to create 2025 EDA visitors' guides to be distributed throughout the state, as well as the neighboring states of Iowa and Wisconsin.

Special Services - Regional Transportation Initiative

- Secured a contract to manage a Legislature-funded study to determine if a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) would be a feasible approach to enhancing transit and transportation services in the 11-county region of southeast Minnesota.
- Created and completed a RFP process to secure a qualified consulting team.
- Facilitated the establishment of a Steering Committee that represents the entire region and communication between the consultants, the oversight committee and other stakeholders involved in the project.

CEDA's Role in Advancing Climate-Smart Reforestation

CEDA is proud to support The Nature Conservancy's Minnesota Million project and the Farm and Forest Growers Co-Op in developing a resilient, climate-smart tree seedling supply chain. Through strategic planning, market development, and capacity-building efforts, CEDA is helping to establish a new, sustainable market for locally grown seedlings that support reforestation and climate adaptation efforts across Minnesota. Our work focuses on fostering collaboration between growers, conservation organizations, and buyers, ensuring economic opportunities for small farmers while addressing the region's seedling shortage. By strengthening this emerging industry, CEDA is driving rural economic growth, environmental resilience, and long-term sustainability in the region.

Strategic Initiatives Highlights

Grants Department

- Authored grant applications totaling over \$6 million for communities, small businesses and higher education facilities throughout the state of Minnesota.
- Authored and was awarded a \$146,850 Department of Education Library Construction grant for Spring Valley Public Library to repair the EIFS and add landscaping.
- Collaborated with Minnesota North on a USDA Wood Innovations grant application, which awarded \$213,279 for the engineering and design of a new biomass boiler for MN North's Ely campus.
- Closed out Blue Earth SCDP grant. Nine homes were rehabbed.
- Continued to disburse Hokah SCDP grant in partnership with Semcac. Hokah was awarded a \$721,625 grant for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing, rental housing and commercial projects. Thus far eight single family homes, six rental projects, and three commercial projects have been completed.
- Continued to disburse Harmony SCDP grant in partnership with Semcac. Harmony was awarded a \$1,017,750 grant for the rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing and commercial projects. Thus far 10 commercial projects have been completed.

Planning Department

- Conducted five housing studies for Swift County, Granada, Truman, Pelican Rapids and Parkers Prairie.
- Led a comprehensive planning effort for the City of Pine Island.
- Facilitated two strategic plans for the communities of Mapleton and Benson.

Rural Business Innovation Lab (RBIL)

- Expanded Impact & Business Support: RBIL successfully guided 11 rural businesses in the 2024 cohort, providing customized one-on-one coaching, strategic planning, and direct connections to funding, mentors, and industry experts. Participating businesses spanned diverse industries, including sustainable agriculture (Rustic Roots, FiddleHead Knob, Lakota Made, Embark Maple, Driftless Seed, Lavender Barnyard), conservation grazing (Cannon Valley Graziers), fiber and apparel (Bayl, Get Bentz Farm), and locally crafted food and beverage (Baptism River Barbeque, Simple Cider Co.).
- Strengthening Entrepreneurial Networks & Ecosystem Development: In 2024, RBIL held eight workshops and networking events, creating vital opportunities for rural entrepreneurs to learn from experts, exchange ideas, and build lasting relationships. This was the first year of DEED funding, which provided additional capacity for outreach, program development, and strategic partnerships. Additionally, Compeer Financial continued to be a cornerstone partner, offering capital resources, financial training, and ecosystem-building support.
- Capital Access & Business Growth: RBIL played a critical role in helping businesses secure over \$500,000 in new capital, enabling them to scale operations, invest in infrastructure, and expand market reach. These funds were a combination of grants, loans, and private investments, directly benefiting businesses in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Workforce Development Highlights

In partnership with South Central Service Cooperative

Janesville Waldorf Pemberton High School

- Assisted in creating career pathways for Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Aviation, and Commercial Driver's License (CDL) professions.
- Organized career day speakers for high school students.
- Engaged high school students with local employers, developed an innovative list of potential field trip options for College & Career Readiness Coordinator.

United South Central High School

- Coordinated Boys and Girls County Day with the American Legion and Auxiliary, hosting 21 students. The event provided insights into county and city government, employment opportunities, and educational requirements, opening pathways to careers in government.
- Hosted the inaugural Career/Job Fair with 22 local vendors, open to all 9-12th graders. The event highlighted local employment opportunities, including apprenticeships and internships, and provided guidance on relevant areas of study.
- Facilitated collaboration with local business partners for a Future Ready CTE grant, supporting a teacher's request to purchase a new mill and lathe. Faculty secured \$12,000 in funding, with assistance from the business partner in equipment installation and training, ensuring students pursuing careers in manufacturing gain hands-on experience with equipment used in the industry.

New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva (NRHEG)

- Organized mock interviews with industry partners, community members, and business professionals to provide students with valuable feedback on their resumes, interview responses, and overall presentation. These actionable insights help students prepare for future interview opportunities.
- Hosted the inaugural cooking challenge, showcasing students' culinary skills. Industry partners, school board members, staff, and a culinary graduate judged the dishes, emphasizing the real-world opportunities available. Local industry partners supported the event by donating protein and allowing students to grocery shop with their donation. This experience helped students with budgeting, time management, and planning skills.
- Facilitated a two-hour budget simulation for all high school juniors, in collaboration with the local financial team. This hands-on experience provided students with a real-world understanding of financial planning and the costs associated with independent living.

Le Sueur-Henderson High School

- Le Sueur-Henderson opened up a brand new elementary school in July 2024. The facility features a new gymnasium, dedicated playground areas, bus drop-off, and storm shelter.
- Developing a robust workforce development program, designed to streamline internships to local jobs in our community.
- One nursing class received two sets of virtual reality goggles, designed to provide students with hands-on experiences in the medical field, without having to leave the classroom.

Tri City United High School

- All Tri City United students grades 9-12 participated in Career Day, an afternoon event designed to help students explore different career fields. The event featured 35 businesses selected by students, and included presenters from the Minnesota Zoo, Mecca Tattoo, Waste Management, and more!
- The Work-Based Learning class hosted weekly speakers from local industries. In this class, students spend part of their time in the classroom, and then the other half they spend working with professionals in the field.
- TCU was able to collaborate with the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce to host a 'Communicating Across Generations Panel', as well as host 'Mock Interviews' with a 9th grade class.

CEDA Rural Capacity Program Highlights

In 2023, CEDA testified in front of the Minnesota Legislature resulting in the passage of a bill that provided \$627,000 in funding to create the Rural Capacity Program (RCP). This program provided CEDA with the opportunity to assist 18 non-metro, rural cities with population under 3,000 with basic economic development initiatives. This forward-thinking investment not only strengthens the economic fabric of these areas, but also ensures a brighter, more prosperous future for residents.

The Investment

Each of the 18 cities participating in the program received \$15,000 in funding, amounting to \$270,000 in direct investment, along with 150 hours of technical assistance, totaling 2,700 CEDA staff hours. These targeted investments provide strategic support for rural economic development.

Communities Served

Cities applied to participate in the program, and were asked to identify one of the following areas of focus: child care, downtown revitalization, business retention and expansion, or revolving loan funds.

The following cities were selected to participate:

- Baudette
- Buhl
- Clarkfield
- Cottonwood
- Danvers
- DeGraff
- Elmore
- Grand Meadow
- Kiester
- Mahnomen
- Newfolden
- New Richland
- New York Mills
- Orr
- Parkers Prairie
- Rushmore
- Vergas
- Warroad

Impact

In small rural communities, community leaders are often a combination of volunteers and elected officials who are juggling community work with their full-time jobs. Having someone with the experience and hours to dedicate to economic development initiatives can focus efforts, build momentum, and lay the groundwork for initiatives that will have lasting impacts for communities.

Through CEDA's collaboration with the 18 participating communities, there has been the creation of Revolving Loan Funds, a Commercial Facade Program, the development of DNR, DEED, and USDA grant applications, business outreach, Community Surveys, the development of structured BR&E programs, and more. Additionally, CEDA RCP team members have been able to leverage further funding to enhance local programming. The ripple effects of this program will have a lasting impact.

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2024 Financial Highlights

Revenue
\$4,360,586

Expense
\$3,750,005

Net Income
\$610,581



our Funding Partners

Thank you for your commitment to the economic vitality of rural communities!

DIAMOND LEVEL PARTNERS



GOLD LEVEL PARTNERS



SILVER LEVEL PARTNERS

- BEVCOMM, INC
- BOLTEN & MENK
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- MAPLE RIVER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
- MISSISSIPPI WELDERS SUPPLY
- PEOPLE'S ENERGY COOPERATIVE
- PIONEER BANK
- THINK BANK
- WINNEBAGO MANUFACTURING

Want to be a champion for rural communities? We'd love to get you on the list! Reach out to our team at info@cedausa.com for more details.