



# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

It's amazing to reflect on how much has changed during my time at CEDA. When I accepted the position some 22 years ago, we had six employees and were relatively confined to Southeast Minnesota. Today, we have over 50 team members, five interns, and are operating throughout greater Minnesota, northern Iowa and western Wisconsin. This steady growth is a testament to our commitment to pivot and adapt to the needs of the rural communities, counties, and organizations we serve.

You may recall that towards the end of 2024 we thoughtfully reworked our organizational structure. The goal of this was to better serve our growing team and to offer a more transparent framework for internal career progression in addition to providing more touch points with our contracted cities and counties. We settled into this new framework throughout 2025, continually tweaking processes to better suit our team and operations. A year later, we are a stronger organization because of those changes with better onboarding practices for new hires, improved HR processes, and regional managers overseeing regional teams so everyone has better support and accountability.

We wanted to reflect the change to a regional structure in this Annual Report so you will notice that communities are listed in their corresponding regions. Our team achieved a great deal in 2025, including dedicating more than 51,000 hours providing direct, on-the-ground support and authoring 100 awarded grants totalling \$8,103,914 for our communities. I invite you to read through our annual report to find out more about the projects and initiatives our team has been working on and the accomplishments they've made.

We look forward to celebrating our 40th year in 2026, a milestone that is a credit to our board of directors, our team and the communities, counties and organizations who've put their trust in us. It will be an opportunity to not only reflect on how far we've come but what the future holds. We look forward to rolling up our sleeves and working alongside you in making our region a better place. One thing is for certain, we will continue to evolve and change and I'm confident that we are on the right track.



*Ron Ziegler*

# 2025 COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS



**REGION 1**  
Chris Hahn  
Regional Manager

## **Eyota, MN** Pop. 2,006

- Awarded the Small Town Grant from Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) in the amount of \$10,000 to implement a Welcome Kit program for the City of Eyota, update logo and branding, and create a library of marketing materials for the city and EDA physical and digital collateral materials.
- Hosted the SEMN Together Housing Tour, showcasing five housing developments in the City of Eyota.
- Built a strong foundation with the EDA using different strategies to help them organize, prioritize, and plan for projects and funding; giving us a solid, measurable, and workable plan for 2026 and beyond.

## **Fillmore County, MN** Pop. 21,228

- Accepted into the Rural Child Care Innovation Program (RCCIP) through First Children's Finance, beginning in January of 2026.
- Obtained approval from the Fillmore County Board of Commissioners to annually award three In-Home Child Care Start Up Microloans at 0% interest for up to \$2,000 per provider. When the provider adheres and follows through on the loan agreement, 25% of the loan will be forgiven.
- Worked with the Fillmore County EDA, along with input and direction from other interested parties, to prepare to launch a collaborative Tourism Initiative "Explore More in Fillmore County".

## **Goodview, MN** Pop. 4,158

- Participated in the groundbreaking of Kickass Beef Jerky, where they were awarded a TIF grant and a \$200,000 Revolving Loan Fund (from Winona County) to build a retail shop that will open in spring 2026.
- Facilitated two Business Assistance and Improvement Program loans to two local businesses to facilitate property repair and renovations.
- Received the Farmer's Market Nutrition Assistance Grant through the MN Department of Agriculture in the amount of \$7,000 for the Goodview Farmer's Market.

## **Harmony, MN** Pop. 1,043

- Facilitated a community town hall in partnership with MiEnergy and Dairyland Power Cooperative to discuss the impacts of a data center for Harmony. Followed by facilitating Joint Planning Sessions for City Council, EDA, and Planning and Zoning to begin drafting a data center ordinance to be inclusive with community feedback and incentives to better the community while upholding the rural characteristics.
- Worked with the Harmony Area Historical Society to secure two Minnesota Historical Society Grants for the Preservation of the Harmony Grain Elevator, totalling \$120,624.
- Restructured the Revolving Loan Fund interest rate from the Wall Street Journal daily rate upon application, to a set 3% interest rate for loans of \$25,000 or less and negotiable for loans exceeding the \$25,000 request, not to exceed -1% prime rate.

## Houston County, MN Pop. 18,843

- Provided assistance to Sno Pac Foods for a cold storage facility expansion project. The EDA helped with a grant application, EDA loan, and tax abatement. The total project cost for the project is around \$7,000,000. Sno Pac will be leasing additional cold storage space to smaller local businesses and producers in the county filling a need for cold storage in the area.
- Celebrated eight years of the Bluff County Collaborative. This partnership between Houston and Fillmore County EDAs, Perkins, Southeast Service Cooperative, Workforce Development Inc., area schools, and many local businesses connects students to workforce pipelines.
- Continued to work with the Houston County Childcare Core team to address childcare needs in the county.

## Plainview, MN Pop. 3,527

- Envision Plainview (REV Program) hosted two Spark Sessions for local community businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Envision Plainview hosted a Childcare Appreciation Event in March 2025 to thank all local daycare providers for their hard work and dedication.
- Facilitated one business utilizing the EDA's Community Development Improvement Program to update their building facade.



## Spring Valley, MN Pop. 2,447

- Completed a Comprehensive Housing Assessment in partnership with Compeer Financial and the CEDA Planning Department, helping to identify needs, capacity, and resources. The city utilized this study to begin marketing 18 residential lots in two different subdivisions, and initiated the development process for two separate multi-unit projects.
- Coordinated implementation of the MN State Building Code permitting, inspections, and enforcement processes for the city, issuing 94 building permits in 2025. Additional support, information, and resources were provided through the creation of a Zoning & Permits tab on the Spring Valley EDA website.
- Actively develop and manage the Spring Valley EDA Website and Community Calendar as an informational community resource. Also coordinated online promotion and participant registration for community events, including: Little Huskers 1K Run, Spring Valley 100/60 Mile Gravel Bike Races, Wednesday's on Broadway, OktoberFest on Broadway, Frozen Feet 6K Run, and Kiwanis/Salvation Army Red Kettle Bell Ringing volunteer sign-up.

## St. Charles, MN Pop. 3,990

- Completed a Hotel Feasibility Study with wonderful results and released an RFP in which the city and EDA have begun interviewing 14 hotel franchises to determine the best fit for the community.
- Facilitated Business Retention and Expansion visits for interested business owners to discuss wins, challenges, and how the city can assist with supporting economic growth. From these conversations, we developed a 2026 Business Learning series, in partnership with regional and state initiatives, to provide expert guidance on the most discussed challenges.
- Facilitated discussions with a dentist to move to the community. They currently do not have dental access within the community and surrounding communities have up to a six month waiting period. They closed on their property location on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

## Wabasha, MN Pop. 2,559

- Directed and coordinated ongoing efforts for housing redevelopment for both single-family and multi-unit housing initiatives.
- Coordinated with MN State Agencies to provide direction and planning support for proposed highway and infrastructure improvements and redesign.
- Actively supported the development of a new commercial port for the city.

## Winona County, MN Pop. 49,671

- Participated in the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting for Z & A Country Market in St. Charles, MN. Z & A is also a recipient of the Winona County Revolving Loan Fund, which assisted with the new construction of the building.
- Awarded and closed on three Revolving Loans to local businesses within Winona County.
- The County EDA currently has five active loans in its revolving loan program.



**REGION 2**  
Laura Qualey  
Regional Manager

## Cannon Falls, MN Pop. 4,220

- Funds were released from the Bring it Home Grant from Goodhue County in the amount of \$108,500 for applications CEDA wrote for the Cannon Falls Housing Initiative (CFHI). These funds were used to purchase a residential lot (\$35,000) for the 18th house to be built by the Cannon Falls High School construction class and to allow the 17th house built by students to be dedicated into the Community Land Trust with the 1st Homes of Rochester (\$73,500). Without these funds, the CFHI would have taken a loss on the house of that amount.
- Facilitated \$1.3 million in residential lot sales for the EDA owned residential housing development. Sales for this development allowed the EDA to move forward with breaking ground on the next phase of the development, creating 25 additional single family lots, to be completed by Summer 2026. 18 homes have been built in this development since September 2024 which is the most new homes built in Cannon Falls in over a decade.
- Secured \$5,750 in grant funds to update wayfinding signage along the inter-city trail system. Updated signage will assist tourists in navigating the trail system to amenities in town and locating trail connections between the Cannon Valley Trail and the Mill Town State Trail.

## Dodge County, MN Pop. 20,867

- Authored and was awarded a \$6,000 General Use grant from Compeer Financial to coordinate a two-day hands-on, virtual "Big Ideas Mobile Learning Lab & Career Exploration Day". A total of 263 high school students from the four school districts interacted with the lab, exposing them to welding, excavating, industrial spray coating (painting), tire changing and 30 other virtual reality career exploration experiences. Local employers were also on site to engage with students about trade careers in the county. Workforce Development Inc was a key partner with this event.
- Coordinated three free training events (8 hours total) for the Dodge County Licensed Child Care professionals with funding provided by the county. These events met the mandatory training hours for the providers to maintain their state licensing requirements. Snacks, meals and beverages were catered for the providers as a means of appreciation for their commitment to serving families in the area. The in-person event gives them an opportunity to network and reenergize.
- A new Housing Study Analysis was conducted by Maxfield Consulting with the assistance of three CEDA team members that serve communities within the county. They provided an inventory of available residential lots for construction, multi-family units, subdivisions in process or any other new housing that has occurred since the last study was released in 2019. This study will assist in attracting developers and builders to the county to fulfill housing needs.

## Goodhue County, MN Pop. 47,582

- Participated in the Goodhue County Housing Committee that brings together regional housing stakeholders to discuss housing obstacles, opportunities and programs by informing the committee members of what CEDA is accomplishing in the communities we serve in the housing sector for Cannon Falls, Kenyon, Goodhue, Pine Island and Zumbrota.
- Participated in status updates with the county surrounding two data center projects that are making their way through the public process in Cannon Falls and Pine Island.
- Participated in local Chamber and community meetings and events around the county to build new relationships and nurture existing ones with community officials and partners.

## Goodhue, MN Pop. 1,250

- The City of Goodhue completed construction of its first Habitat for Humanity home, welcoming a new family to the community in August 2025. The family's children are now enrolled in the Goodhue School District, strengthening both the community and local schools.
- Led the development of the 2025 Greater Minnesota Small Cities Housing Grant application, which resulted in a \$55,000 award from Minnesota Housing. The application was completed in partnership with Goodhue County Habitat for Humanity and the Goodhue School District. Construction of the home will be completed by Goodhue High School students in grades 10–12 through the construction class, with a projected completion date of June 2026.
- Revitalized the Goodhue Facade Improvement Program, leading to three local businesses currently completing exterior improvements. These upgrades will enhance the overall appearance and vitality of the downtown area.

**In 2025, our team authored 100 awarded grants, securing \$8,103,914 for our rural communities.**

## Hayfield, MN Pop. 1,364

- Finalized the Emerald Ash Borer Grant with the DNR which enabled 26 new trees to be planted around the city, replacing 26 ash trees that were removed.
- Awarded a \$30,000 grant from the Taylor Family Farms Foundation to assist with updates to Earl B. Himle Memorial Park. The park received new playground equipment, ADA compliant concrete walking path, and ADA compliant restrooms.
- Participated in “Big Ideas Mobile Learning Lab & Career Exploration Day” which included Hayfield students and other Dodge County students. The mobile lab gave students hands-on experiences with careers in the trades and opportunities to network with several Dodge County employers.

## Kenyon, MN Pop. 1,894

- Prepared and submitted an application on behalf of the city to the Empowering Small Minnesota Cities program through the University of Minnesota Extension Services. Based on feedback from a community resident survey, the city is planning improvements to Depot Park to meet ADA requirements and expand recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. Proposed upgrades include pickleball courts, a walking track, and a new access connection from the Trondheim Development. This access would allow residents to reach the park and other parts of the community without walking or biking along the heavily traveled Highway 60.
- The Kenyon EDA established the Kenyon Industrial Park in 2019 to support long-term business growth. In 2025, the EDA completed the sale of the park's first lot, marking an important milestone in the city's economic development efforts and demonstrating market interest in the site.
- The former Sunset Nursing Home was repurposed to create new affordable housing opportunities in Kenyon. This redevelopment has provided older residents with an option to downsize, while freeing up existing single-family homes for younger families and new residents to move into the community.

## Mantorville, MN Pop. 1,111

- The EDA committed to supporting the building of a bandshell in Riverside Park. Throughout the summer of 2025, Music in Mantorville provided 13 Tuesday nights with musical entertainment, food vendors, and the farmers' market. The event is also increasing economic benefits for local businesses. The average weekly attendance for the first year was 350-400 people. Bands with larger followings are now reaching out to be considered for the 2026 schedule.
- The Larger Than Life Art Exhibit annual art fair is unveiled on the 4th Saturday of June and extends through Marigold Days, one weekend beyond Labor Day. For 2025, the event increased to 29 local artists and one sculptor. They are displayed throughout Riverside Park and available to be viewed at your convenience. Each year, it continues to grow in popularity.
- The Mantorville EDA was awarded a \$5,000 SEMAC grant to support artist fees, honoraria and stipends, materials and supplies, publicity, and facility and equipment rentals. These funds will be used to continue the Larger Than Life Art in the Park exhibit in 2026, which showcases the talents of regional artists and expands its appeal beyond Mantorville. The exhibit's continued popularity is expected to draw visitors throughout the summer, enhancing community vibrancy and increasing support for local businesses.

## Oronoco, MN Pop. 1,802

- Conducted monthly meetings with various groups representing all aspects of the city to select a city brand, including a new city logo which will be on all city documents and vehicles. The final brand was selected in December.
- Worked with city departments to develop a comprehensive checklist to organize and guide the development of residential and commercial land within the city. The checklist establishes a clear schedule and coordinated process to streamline decision-making among the EDA, Planning and Zoning Commission, and City Council, supporting efficient growth and development citywide.
- Worked collaboratively with city administration to complete a comprehensive study evaluating and updating the efficiency of city-owned buildings. The Southeast Minnesota Small Town Energy Efficiency and Conservation Planning Grant was written in cooperation with a local construction company to support completion of the study.

## Pine Island, MN Pop. 3,769

- Awarded a DNR Outdoor Recreation grant for \$238,900. This grant will be used to replace the playground equipment at Trailhead Park with new inclusive playground equipment.
- Awarded a \$10,000 grant from SMIF's Small Town Grant. This grant will be used to complete a community mural to be installed at Trailhead Park in 2026. Additionally, we raised \$5,750 from three community organizations to cover the remaining cost of the mural.
- Organized a childcare initiative committee to discuss and plan various ways to bring additional resources to current childcare providers as well as ways to increase childcare availability in the community. This committee has decided to host a childcare appreciation event in coordination with SMIF in March of 2026 to thank current providers and attract new providers.

## Rushford Village, MN Pop. 790

- Completed and presented the 2025 Comprehensive Plan to city officials, which was adopted mid-year.
- Created a new fix-up fund utilizing revolving loan funds and a Planning Commission-administered Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) program.
- Started collaboration efforts with neighboring cities and their business leaders to determine how the communities can work together to nurture growth and provide sustainability to the area.

## Spring Grove, MN Pop. 1,256

- Awarded a \$500,000 Community Facilities grant through the MN Department of Education for a new community center with library to be built in the downtown district.
- Awarded \$2,500 from Houston County for child care study to determine next steps in reopening a 90-slot daycare that closed in August of 2024.
- Awarded a \$10,000 Taylor Family Farms grant to update the disc golf course and add a new kiosk featuring a course and city map.



## West Concord, MN Pop. 861

- Working with the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, the city brought together area residents to create a community foundation to sustain growth and vibrancy for years into the future.
- The EDA has resurrected its facade improvement forgivable loan program for local businesses. Four businesses were approved in 2025, with additional businesses looking to apply in 2026.
- Tier II Housing funds were received from the state and are being managed by SEMMCHRA. Homeowners can receive up to \$25,000 for upgrades to their existing homes, and it is completely forgivable after ten years. In 2025, eight homes were completed, with four more in the process of being completed. There are also another four being considered thanks to an extension of the program. This could result in a total of 16 homes receiving important updates to secure sustainability for the existing homeowner.

## Zumbrota, MN Pop. 3,726

- Awarded \$85,000 from the Greater Minnesota Small Cities (Tier II Cities) Grant to aid Goodhue County Habitat for Humanity with the construction of a new home in the city.
- Awarded a \$1,000 Paint the Town grant from SMIF and a \$5,560 grant from the Goodhue County Partner Award to replace public water fountain/bottle filler in the trailhead of Goodhue County Trails
- The city worked with a local marketing firm to start marketing and promoting the benefits of shopping and living in Zumbrota. This marketing campaign used Instagram and Facebook to get city events outside the boundaries of Zumbrota, and the EDA is extending the campaign into 2026.



## REGION 3

Dave Schmidt  
Regional Manager

### Blue Earth, MN Pop. 3,174

- Received \$20,000 in grant funding to allow dedicated staff time for REV. Due to this dedicated time, we were awarded \$75,000 to participate in Main Street Businesses Focused on Food and Ag (MBFFA) in partnership with Minnesota State University, Mankato and GreenSeam. With these funds, we developed a Lunch and Learn series that streams into several other CEDA communities and offers a technical assistance component to area businesses.
- Facilitated TIF and Job Creation Fund (JCF) for Winnebago Manufacturing to assist with costs of funding a \$7 million dollar expansion.
- Implemented a storytelling and promotional campaign named Experience Blue Earth, highlighting local businesses through coordinated marketing, giveaways, and community engagement. This campaign was funded through a \$8,338 SMIF Smalltown Grant.

### Ellendale, MN Pop. 676

- Worked with Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership to develop a plan to build two duplexes on a vacant lot near downtown.
- Conducted business visits with about 1/3 of area businesses.
- Worked with the city and the engineer on a stormwater resilience grant and developing a full report on current services.

### Faribault County, MN Pop. 13,921

- Marketed, inventoried and successfully sold a loan-defaulted commercial property (Miller's Corner gas station), returning the asset to productive use and supporting local economic stability.
- Administered \$15,000 in grant funding to three licensed childcare providers, supporting home and center improvements and facilitating CPR and First Aid recertification to strengthen childcare capacity and safety.
- Coordinated two new revolving loan fund projects, assisting local businesses with access to capital and advancing community economic development goals.

### Janesville, MN Pop. 2,462

- Partnered with Music in the Park to start a community Farmer's Market.
- Helped find a structural engineer to provide guidance and direction on converting a vacant downtown lot into a usable community space.
- Secured a SMIF Paint the Town grant to repaint the historic Janesville Public Library.

### Lake Crystal, MN Pop. 2,539

- Developed and successfully executed a plan to transition staffing of the Lake Crystal Ambulance Service from the city to Madelia Health, thus ensuring the financial sustainability of the service while providing ambulance membership with additional training and opportunities for career advancement.
- Created and implemented a Business Retention & Expansion program for the city, resulting in 18 separate business visits and grant assistance that yielded two separate awards (one for \$40,000 and one for \$1,500) through the Main Street Economic Revitalization Grant.
- Facilitated a tour of Truck Bodies Equipment International, one of Lake Crystal's largest employers, for Lake Crystal Wellcome Memorial High School students.

## Le Sueur, MN Pop. 4,213

- Authored and awarded \$221,141 from the DNR Outdoor Recreation Grant for upgrades to American Legion Park. The project aims to revitalize the park space by adding a synthetic ice rink, connecting the existing park features, and creating a destination location within the region.
- Received \$5,000 through Compeer Financial's Rural Feasibility Study program to update the City of Le Sueur's Housing Study.
- Hosted Business Retention & Expansion visits, in conjunction with GreenSeam, at 11 local food and agricultural businesses.

## Madelia, MN Pop. 2,396

- Facilitated the construction of a market rate 4-plex rental property through a \$125,000 low-interest loan to expand housing options in the community.
- Introduced students to key elements of business planning and supported them in designing a complete business plan for their snack cart. This partnership between the Madelia School District, Madelia Chamber and EDA has helped create a stronger pipeline of future business owners and innovators.
- Authored several grant applications and led community engagement efforts to facilitate redevelopment of Watona Park and ensure sustainable planning for the future.



## Mapleton, MN Pop. 1,710

- Opened Mapleton's Child Care House (pictured above), a freestanding structure designed to support 12 child care slots and one new provider using over \$300,000 in grant funds from DEED, SMIF, Compeer Financial, and local community partners.
- Assisted in the redevelopment of the former Maple River School site to a Dollar General Market.
- Marketed the community by creating dedicated Facebook and LinkedIn pages for the Mapleton Economic Development Authority, garnering over 200 followers amongst both channels.

## Martin County, MN Pop. 20,025

- Expanded broadband access to nearly 280 households through a \$3 million grant to Federated Rural Electric Association.
- Added nearly 50 childcare slots through a \$100,000 grant to Lakeview Methodist Health Services to build out their new childcare space.
- Supported more than 130 businesses through workshops on MN Paid Leave, Business Storytelling, Digital Marketing, Quickbooks, and Succession Planning.

## Wells, MN Pop. 2,401

- Assisted three local businesses in successfully securing a total of \$65,000 in Revolving Loan Fund financing through the EDA to support business startups, ownership transitions, and facility or equipment updates within the community.
- Developed and implemented a Residential Rehabilitation Grant application utilizing recycled Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) funds to support homeowner improvements and reinvestment in existing housing stock.
- Secured approval and formal agreement from the EDA, HRA, and City Council to participate in a strategic planning process, with completion anticipated in 2026, to guide community and economic development priorities for the next three to five years.

## Winnebago, MN Pop. 1,391

- Created and implemented an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program with \$140,000 in forgivable funds available. Eleven projects were selected, and over \$85,000 was allocated and paid in 2025.
- Facilitated a community-wide “Moving Winnebago Forward” meeting. One result was to create and publish a monthly newsletter promoting events in the community and sharing important community information.
- Winnebago is known as “The Small Town With a Big Heart”. We started work on the first of many community hearts that will be displayed throughout town. The first one will be placed in front of City Hall in early 2026.



## REGION 4

Jordan Grossman  
Regional Manager

## Arlington, MN Pop. 2,247

- Helped with selling city land and moving a project forward for a business owner who plans to build a quilting retreat center, shop, and cafe.
- Helped move a project forward that will redevelop an old assisted living building into a hotel and childcare center.
- Provided six local businesses with EDA loans for signs, facade, and rental rehab.

## Benson, MN Pop. 3,480

- Supported the CSNelson Properties Phase 3 Cottage Square housing project by coordinating city infrastructure and development activities. Utility construction was completed, the site was transferred to the developer in build-ready condition, and construction of 22 rental housing units began in Fall 2025 with anticipated completion in Spring 2026.
- Served as lead grant administrator for the Benson Community Center renovation, supporting the city through project start and substantial completion in 2025. The \$1.278 million project, funded by \$678,000 in MN CDBG-CV funds and a \$600,000 city investment, modernized the facility while preserving its historic character.
- Supported the expansion of a local coffee shop by assisting with site acquisition and gap financing through the Benson EDA revolving loan fund. The project enabled a drive-through expansion, with buildings now placed in their permanent location and the site positioned for continued development.

**Our Community Support Program (CSP) team dedicated more than 51,000 hours providing direct, on-the-ground support to communities in MN, IA and WI.**

## Chokio, MN Pop. 411

- Authored the MN Forestry ReLeaf Grant for \$50,000 to fund the removal of 30 boulevard ash trees for preventative measures against Emerald Ash Borer.
- Authored the MPCA Small Communities Planning Grant for \$98,000 to help fund an I&I plan for city infrastructure.
- Aided in the development of a new City of Chokio website to help them have an online presence where residents can have quick access to documents, forms, important news, and online bill pay.

## Glencoe, MN Pop. 5,744

- Helped fundraise money for new pickleball courts. Construction was completed in October.
- Applied and was accepted into the First Children's Finance Rural Child Care Innovation Program.
- Worked with CEDA's Planning Department to complete a new Housing Study. Secured a Compeer Financial's Feasibility Study Grant to help cover the cost.



## Lester Prairie, MN Pop. 1,895

- Mapped out city industrial land for sale and provided best use recommendations.
- Coordinated efforts to list land for sale with IAG Commercial to boost the city's efforts in selling the property.
- Launched a BR&E study starting with a business survey and local outreach. Programming to come in 2026.

## Murdock, MN Pop. 306

- Authored and secured \$8,000 in grant funding from Pembina Pipeline Corporation and Corteva Agriscience for the purchase of new SCBA equipment for the Murdock Fire Department. The investment improves firefighter safety and strengthens the department's capacity to respond to structure fires and other hazardous emergency situations.
- Guided the Sabin S. Murdock House demolition process, completed in May 2025, by coordinating approvals with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office.
- Partnered with the Murdock Area Community Club to plan a business pop-up site on a city-owned lot at Hollis Street and Highway 12 and authored a Junegrass Winds Grant, securing \$3,000 to install electrical service to support temporary business structures and trailers.

## Nobles County, MN Pop. 22,290

- Authored and secured \$480,000 in grant funding through DEED and \$25,000 through Taylor Family Farms Foundation. The funds will be used for two new child care host sites in the county.
- Partnered with the county to host a Child Care Provider Appreciation Event for family child care providers and child care center staff. The event was complete with a pasta buffet, socialization and painting welcome signs together.
- Partnered with the county to host several "Provider+Kids" events. Child care providers and the children they care for were bussed to and from outings in the community, such as playing at the local YMCA.

## Pelican Rapids, MN Pop. 2,577

- Assisted the city in recruiting 27 new home owners who all signed up for homeownership incentives. The main incentives used were \$1 infill lots, free water/sewer service for one year, and \$5,000 property tax rebate program (new construction).
- Assisted five new businesses to open their doors in Pelican Rapids, who all utilized the EDA's business grant and incentive program. These businesses were a brand new 24/7 access gym, laundromat, hydration tea/shake shop, coffee shop, and insurance agency. Each business received a \$5,000 grant and utilized the city tax rebate program as a finance tool to move forward with their business plans.
- Secured a \$11,500 grant to launch an Equity E Bike program. Low income residents can ride for free while tourists pay to ride on the weekends, sustaining the program long term.

## Vergas, MN Pop. 357

- Identified a location for a city led new construction daycare duplex.
- Awarded RCCIP program to assist with the childcare shortage and guide the EDA through construction.
- Administered the EDA's Business Facade Grant Program that is a \$50,000 pool of funds available to businesses on a one-to-one match up to \$5,000 each to update the exteriors of their buildings.



**REGION 5**  
Jessica Pellinen  
Regional Manager

## Floodwood, MN Pop. 517

- Assisted in establishing and funding a local housing trust fund and reviewed blight analysis to determine target properties to maintain housing stock.
- Conducted a preliminary structural integrity analysis of a former DNR watchtower the city is considering acquiring as an amenity to encourage people to stop in Floodwood.
- Providing support and guidance to two potential housing projects: A former mobile home court redevelopment and a new 127-acre multi-use development.

## Hill City, MN Pop. 613

- Authored and was awarded a \$6,200 Veterans Commemoration Grant through the state's Legacy Fund to make upgrades to Veterans Park. The upgrades included repainting the helicopter, repainting the gazebo, adding branch emblems, and installing a five-foot kneeling statue. Additional financial support for the project was provided by local organizations.
- Organized a beautification day throughout the city. Painting all the public picnic tables, gazebos, pavilions, and a mural at the campground. This effort was completed at no cost to the city through a partnership with Home Depot.
- Authored and was awarded a \$150,000 grant through the Blandin Foundation for a range of local community projects and initiatives including expanding recreation, beautification projects, and projects focused on preserving historical and cultural identity.

## Itasca County, MN Pop. 45,014

- Itasca County Trails Study: Six funders collectively invested \$208,000 to support this 18-month study. May Mobility will collect trail counter data and provide it to the University of Minnesota for analysis and a final report. The findings will position Itasca County to pursue larger federal funding opportunities to maintain and enhance the county's trail assets.
- Secured \$2.3 million from 49 grant awards to be used towards community projects.
- A two-year \$140,000 improvement project for the American Legion Campground in Feeley Township was completed. This project was 100% grant funded and included upgraded electrical hookups, shower house renovations, new highway signage, a redesigned sandy swimming beach with shoreline rip-rap preservation, and the addition of a maintenance utility vehicle, park benches, and indoor dining tables.

## Remer, MN Pop. 391

- The 15-foot Eagle statue within the city was fully repainted, restoring its appearance and preserving it as a community landmark.
- Organized a business networking event for local business owners, providing access to resources and connecting them with regional partners. The event was well attended with 15 businesses and six nonprofit partner agencies presenting on topics.
- An ATV city trail and corresponding signage were established, including the creation of maps and clear markers to help visitors understand where ATV use is permitted and pointing out local businesses.

## Cohasset, MN Pop. 2,700

- Led the selection of a new website developer and coordinated launch of a redesigned city website that will go live in March. The website will highlight economic development opportunities and business resources.
- Developed a professional marketing packet for the city's available lots showcasing key assets and clearly articulating why developers should choose Cohasset.
- Completed the city's Strategic Plan outlining development goals and initiated the Comprehensive Plan process, which is scheduled to begin in March 2026.



## WISCONSIN

James Hanke

Vice President, Wisconsin CSP

## Rusk County, WI Pop. 14,168

- Authored and was awarded a \$125,000 Small Business Development Grant from Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). The two-year competitive program will consider applicants and award grants for up to \$10,000 to for-profit enterprises with ten or fewer full-time employees who demonstrate a need for financial and technical assistance in order to advance their business.
- Along with other key stakeholders, Rusk County economic development is partnering with Price County, WI in an effort to secure Thrive Rural Wisconsin grant funding. The intent of the grant application is to complete a feasibility study to identify mode conversion opportunities and to explore a concept of operations to revitalize rail service in Price County, which will extend beyond to neighboring interchange and delivery areas, including Rusk County.
- Filled a long-term gap by providing a defined and consistent contact to local and neighboring government officials, regional economic development partners, regional planning commissions, and County businesses. Having someone available to be engaged in economic development related conversations, partnerships, and initiatives is crucial to the economic success of the county.

## Viroqua, WI Pop. 4,407

- Supported the City of Viroqua as they develop the Hansen Farm Property, which includes over 100 housing units to be developed by four different developers, and commercial development along the Hwy 14 corridor. The development has been supported by the city and the Viroqua Development Corporation and fulfills the city's interests in adding additional workforce housing.
- Supported the city by drafting MOU's and Development Agreements for commercial users in the Viroqua Business Park. Two additional users will be building in 2026 after purchasing property in the park.

## Washburn County, WI Pop. 16,982

- Continuing with year two of the WI Rural Entrepreneurial Ventures (REV) program, and will be hosting its first event in early February 2026.
- Made significant strides in solidifying the investor base and strengthening business retention and expansion efforts throughout the county.
- Played a significant role in assisting the Village of Birchwood to develop a behind the meter solar array at the Village's wastewater treatment facility.

## 7 Rivers Alliance

- Created the 7 Rivers Alliance Housing Consortium, a group of regional business, government and economic development leaders to examine how to align our regional workforce needs with workforce housing.
- Completed an economic development plan for Jackson County from our strategic planning services. That plan identified the top need for the county was hiring an economic development staff person, which is underway.
- Helped facilitate weekly conversations with local government and business leaders dealing with the unexpected closing of the Blackhawk Bridge that connects Wisconsin and Iowa.



## IOWA

Jason Passmore  
Vice President, Iowa CSP

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

- Continued to manage the innovative Childcare Solutions Program aimed at retaining and recruiting workforce for childcare facilities in Howard County. \$109,496 of funding was awarded to three facilities in Howard County, secured from grant awards and donations from businesses and organizations.
- Met with thirty-five entrepreneurs and supplied \$445,000 in new revolving loan funds creating and retaining a total of 150 jobs in 2025, bringing the current total amount of funds in circulation with Howard County businesses to \$1,528,500.
- Managed the Howard County Housing Revolving Loan Fund as it finished its third year in existence and the fourth and fifth new spec homes were constructed utilizing \$160,000. Ten new rental units are under construction utilizing \$40,000 of the CUSB Bank Historic Downtown Cresco RLF and \$195,000 of the Howard County Supervisors LMI set-aside fund. Howard County further realized an investment of \$469,457 in Housing Trust Fund dollars to renovate twenty existing LMI occupied homes.



# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



## Entrepreneurial Programs

Cameron Payne  
Entrepreneurial Programs Manager

- Completed Rural Business Innovation Lab's (RBIL) third full year and supported the largest cohort to date with 15 businesses. Six of those 15 businesses were located in Wisconsin, which was made possible through securing a \$50,000 WEDC grant.
- Demonstrated measurable business growth across the cohort, with total capital access increasing from \$3,960,400 to \$4,489,723, total employment growing from 32 to 53 jobs, local supplier relationships increasing from 122 to 125, average lifetime revenue per business rising from \$402,364 to \$868,027, and average lifetime profit per business increasing from \$4,778 to \$99,000.
- Integrated entrepreneurial programming more deeply into CEDA's core services by delivering workshops in CEDA communities, providing targeted short-term coaching to businesses in CEDA contract areas, and supporting communities in developing actionable work plans that align entrepreneurship with broader economic development goals.



## Grants Department

Hillary Tweed  
Vice President, Minnesota CSP  
Grants Manager

- Authored and was awarded a \$2,686,500 forgivable loan through MN Housing's Publicly Owned Housing Program (POHP) for the Jackson, MN HRA. These funds will be used for roof replacement, new siding and new windows for 24 housing units.
- Closed out a Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) grant for the City of Harmony in December. Through this grant 18 commercial rehab projects were completed, utilizing \$510,000 of SCDP grant funds, \$144,632.24 in private funds and \$127,320 of EDA funds.
- CEDA authored 100 awarded grants, totaling \$8,103,914 in funding for rural communities, counties, and organizations.



## Planning Department

Annie Nichols  
Planning Manager

- Strengthened departmental capacity by creating a new 1.5 FTE Planning Associate position, enabling completion of five housing studies for Spring Valley, Sherburn, Glencoe, Henning, Washburn County (WI), and Watonwan County; two strategic plans for Babbitt and Cohasset; and a rental market analysis for Spring Grove.
- Redesigned Steering Committee engagement by incorporating guided exercises that move communities from planning to implementation, including Glencoe's Housing Study, where the process helped uncover barriers to housing development and led to the identification of concrete strategies to move development forward.
- Enhanced internal workflows and proposal development practices to improve consistency, clarity, and competitiveness, strengthening the department's visibility and resulting in a more robust pipeline of projects heading into 2026.

# Workforce Development

In partnership with South Central Service Cooperative

## Le Sueur-Henderson High School

- Awarded \$10,000 from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Small Town Grant Program to support TreeHouse Le Sueur. TreeHouse is a youth empowerment program offering inclusive resources and support for youth and families facing unexcused absences at school.
- Organized the 2nd Annual "Local Tour of Manufacturing," a day-long career exploration event connecting local students with regional manufacturers through on-site tours and employer engagement. (Pictures below)
- Awarded \$19,000 from the South Central Cooperatives' Future Ready CTE Grant for appliance and ProStart curriculum upgrades in the Family and Consumer Science (FACS) classroom.



## United South Central High School

- Secured \$2,000 in transportation funding to ensure students could attend career exploration opportunities.
- Brought in industry professionals and guest speakers to connect students directly with careers aligned to their interests. Also hosted a Mobile Health Lab experience, allowing students to explore hands-on healthcare career options and training pathways.
- Partnered with local business professionals to conduct mock interviews, giving students hands-on experience and practical feedback to strengthen their career readiness skills.

## New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva (NRHEG)

- Partnered with SouthPoint Financial to bring Budget City to the school, providing all juniors and seniors with a hands-on, real-world financial literacy experience.
- Facilitated mock interviews by engaging local businesses as interviewers, providing students with real-world interview experience and preparation for future career opportunities.
- Continue building partnerships with local businesses and community members to keep engaging with the local school.

## Tri-City United High School

- Hosted a weekly speaker series as part of the 'Work-Based Learning Curriculum', bringing 14 businesses into the classroom throughout the semester.
- Collaborated with SouthPoint Financial to bring Budget City to the school, engaging all juniors and seniors in hands-on financial literacy learning.
- Received \$22,000 from the Future Ready CTE Grant to purchase welding equipment in the middle school.



# Rural Capacity Program

Amy Schaefer  
RCP Manager

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature appropriated \$627,000 for CEDA to help 18 non-metro, rural cities under 3,000 in population with basic economic development initiatives. This state funding provided selected cities up to 150 hours of technical assistance and \$15,000 in project funding. Cities applied for help in one of the following areas: childcare, downtown revitalization, business retention and expansion, revolving loan funds, and entrepreneur incubation; and were selected based on need. The program's first round was completed in 2025.

## Communities Served

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

## Highlights from Round One

- Cities such as Clarkfield, Cottonwood, New Richland, and Baudette implemented matching grant programs to assist businesses in enhancing storefronts.
- Rushmore established a revolving loan fund (RLF) to support local businesses, while Parkers Prairie expanded its existing fund by securing \$12,100 in donations and using the combined \$27,100 as a match for an \$81,300 USDA grant. In Grand Meadow, the city pooled its RCP award with existing EDA funds to develop a forgivable loan opportunity, expanding the reach and impact of available financial assistance.
- In Buhl, a collaborative feasibility study brought together a planning firm, city staff, and an assisted living center to explore adding a childcare facility. Similarly, in Newfolden, the initiative allowed community members to better support current and future childcare providers through targeted planning efforts.
- Danvers developed concrete architectural plans to transform a former bank into a community center, turning conceptual discussions into actionable projects. In New Richland, architectural renderings were pursued for the historic Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) building to explore new meeting space options. Other cities, such as Grand Meadow and New York Mills, emphasized marketing and branding efforts to better position themselves for resident attraction and business retention.
- In many cases, cities leveraged additional funds beyond the \$15,000 provided through the program. Clarkfield reported approximately \$49,080 in external funding, while De Graff submitted grant applications totaling up to \$50,000 possible dollars. Danvers submitted two separate grants for \$5,000 and \$50,000, and Vergas secured \$35,000 in additional support. These examples highlight how the technical assistance and momentum generated by the program served as a springboard for further investment.

## Continued Impact

These projects reflect a strong emphasis on revitalizing downtown corridors and supporting business infrastructure, while also addressing long-standing challenges such as childcare availability and access to capital. The diversity of project types underscores the importance of allowing local communities to identify and respond to their most pressing economic development needs.

The Rural Capacity Program supported meaningful, community-specific outcomes across Minnesota's rural cities. The program empowered local leaders to act on their priorities while building capacity for long-term success. The demonstrated success of this initiative ultimately led the Minnesota Legislature to pass a bill appropriating funding for a second round of the program, starting in 2026, ensuring continued support for rural communities across the state.

We are grateful for Senator Nelson and Representative Pursell for sponsoring the inclusion of the Rural Capacity Program in both rounds of appropriations.

# Board of Directors

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## CEDA Staff

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| Andrew Hoiness | Jayne Longmire   | Lisa Randall     | Tracy Hensley   |
| Angie Koplow   | Jeff Stevens     | Luke Lammers     | Trisha Hess     |

## Financials

|                         | 2025<br>(unaudited) | 2024        | 2023        | 2022        | 2021        |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Revenue</b>          | \$3,979,536         | \$4,360,586 | \$4,649,842 | \$2,607,910 | \$2,830,781 |
| <b>Expenses</b>         | \$4,230,465         | \$3,750,005 | \$3,561,045 | \$2,881,819 | \$2,489,033 |
| <b>Operating Income</b> | -\$250,929          | \$610,581   | \$1,088,797 | -\$273,909  | \$341,748   |

# Our Funding Partners

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



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*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](mailto:info@cedausa.com) for more details.*