



September 2013

## Building Economic Development Capacity through Partnerships

### Abstract

- Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation leveraged the expertise of APEX (Area Partnership for Economic Expansion) to expand the organization's business development capacity.

### Overview

The Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation (BCEDC) is a public/private economic development organization located in Washburn, Wisconsin. Bayfield County sits south of Lake Superior in northwest Wisconsin and touts manufacturing, food production and tourism as key industries.

BCEDC's mission is to improve the economic climate by supporting new and existing businesses through business planning, site selection, marketing assistance and several other capacity-building services.

### The Opportunity

In 2011, BCEDC was introduced to the Area Partnership for Economic Expansion (APEX), the private sector-led business development engine for northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. Scottie Sandstrom, Executive Director of the BCEDC states, "A priority for our Executive Committee and Board was to clarify our strategic plan, develop a credentials piece and power point presentation highlighting the business climate, workforce development and quality of life in Bayfield County. Our need and the APEX expertise made the timing right to leverage a partnership."

APEX proposed that the two organizations collaborate to enhance the Bayfield County area's business attraction, expansion and retention capabilities. APEX's mission includes promotion of sustainable economic growth of industries that align with the region's competitive advantages. The organization invests significant human and financial resources to build sophisticated attraction, expansion and retention strategies and business cases to cost-justify investment within the region.

Since 2003, through attraction, expansion and retention efforts, APEX has impacted over 3,050 jobs in the region, resulting in an annual regional payroll of over \$110 million and contributing to over \$12 million in state and local taxes annually. Partnership with regional economic development entities has been core to these metrics and continues to be a priority for the organization. APEX has committed resources to partnering with local city and county economic development organizations within the region to align regional strategies and add capacity to these organizations in a cost-effective manner.



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**“APEX has been a valuable asset in assisting BCEDC in coordinating more formal processes and marketing materials that ultimately elevate our County’s presence at the local, regional and national level.”**

**– Scottie Sandstrom  
BCEDC Executive Director**

The BCEDC board and staff saw the opportunity to leverage APEX’s expertise to benefit Bayfield County through a more defined relationship. APEX lead the organization through a process with the intention of building internal capacity and adding value to the regional economic development community. The partnership involved a contract with APEX set around specific deliverables, including:

- Annual development of a strategic, measurable plan
- Assessment and development of a business retention and expansion program
- Differentiating typical roles of community and economic development and identifying resources
- Develop enhanced marketing collateral and credentials
- Build cost-justified business case models for defined industries

As part of the agreement, APEX also leveraged their industry-specific expertise on the national level to assist and enhance BCEDC’s marketing efforts to prepare the County for inquiries from a national perspective, including how to:

- Position the community to attract the attention of corporate site selectors and provide timely, accurate responses to inquiries
- Manage expectations of local public and private leaders through a site selection process
- Leverage public and private economic development partners at the appropriate time

## The Outcome

With almost two years of successful partnership with APEX behind them, BCEDC plans to continue their investment going forward through 2014. BCEDC attributes the growing APEX partnership to a robust deal sheet and the following accomplishments:

- Since 2012, BCEDC has impacted over 150 jobs in the County with over \$1,200,000 in capital investment through retention, expansion, or attraction efforts
- Established a business and retention program to identify expansion and retention opportunities. Thirty one visits were conducted in 2012
- Created new marketing collateral and credentials materials that showcase the County
- Consolidated information on available sites and incentives to enhance the business case for business retention, expansion, or attraction prospects
- Positioned BCEDC as the information source for businesses in the area

## About APEX

APEX is the private-sector led business development engine for northeast Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin. APEX investor-members represent some of the most influential companies in the region, with a collaborative approach to promoting sustainable economic growth. APEX attraction, expansion and retention efforts focus in areas including aviation, data centers, manufacturing, professional services and next generation forest products. Since 2003, through attraction, expansion and retention efforts, APEX has impacted over 3,050 jobs in the region, resulting in an annual regional payroll of over \$110 million and contributing to over \$12 million in state and local taxes annually.