



**ACCREDITED
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
ORGANIZATION**

International Economic Development Council

NEW NORTH, INC.
Green Bay, Wisconsin

ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT REPORT
AUGUST 2024

Reviewed by:

Justin Horvath, CEcD
President & Chief Executive Officer
Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership
Corunna, Michigan

Jim Devine MPA, CEcD, FM, HLM
Freelance Economic and Community Development Consultant
Fernandina Beach, Florida

Allison J. H. Thompson, CEcD, FM, EDFP
President & CEO
Economic Development Alliance of Jefferson County, Arkansas
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

New North, Inc. in Green Bay, Wisconsin, submitted an application to become accredited in January 2024. The documentation was found to be complete, and a site visit was held on August 5 – 7, 2024.

Overview

New North, Inc. covers an 18-county region in Northeast Wisconsin, with the largest cities being Green Bay, Appleton, Oshkosh, and Sheboygan. Collectively, the region has a population of 1.3 million people, with 667,000 employed, and an \$81.2 billion annual GDP (22% of the state's economy).

Employment is highly diversified, with the largest sectors being:

- manufacturing (140,000)
- healthcare (78,000)
- paper production (62,000 (direct and indirect) - #1 state in the US for production)
- food and beverage (43,000)
- transportation and logistics (22,300 – 18th largest concentration in US)
- energy (22,000)
- aerospace (6,100)

Just a few of the prominent companies highlighted during the review included Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry, US Venture, Microsoft, Johnsonville Sausage, Kimberly-Clark, and Kohler. The region is blessed by many large, medium, and small locally founded, some multi-generational companies, who commit to regional philanthropic and employment opportunities for residents. This DNA runs throughout the region, New North's staff, investors' leadership, and public and private alliances.

Of course, there is also a robust infrastructure, including two interstates, water ports, rail, two international airports, and significant broadband internet (more on this later). But the people and partnerships make the secret sauce for success.

One unique observation noted during the review - there is a strong identity revolving around (and including) the NFL team Green Bay Packers, and it feels like their historically winning culture has become ingrained in the region, and is reflected by the positive, hardworking, community-minded spirit of local business and government leaders. The Green Bay Packers are owned by the community and their philanthropy, leadership, and community engagement is evident in many regional initiatives led by New North and others. Since 1986, the Green Bay Packers Foundation has donated more than \$ 22 million to charity. And it lends its name and leadership to many other regional efforts to support and build the region. The teamwork aspect is also pervasive, with a complete focus on collaboration across the entire region and no concerns about activities being concentrated in the biggest city (which can be found in many other metropolitan areas across the United States).



Organizational Overview

New North was formed in 2005 as a 501(c)3 non-profit economic development organization with a goal of creating, connecting, and convening regional strategic initiatives for business and talent development in Northeast Wisconsin.

Their mission is to be a catalyst for regional prosperity for all through collaborative action. Their shared vision is to be nationally and globally competitive for personal, community, and economic growth. The organization values inclusive collaboration, representing the collective region for business investment and for individuals looking to make the New North their home, and their desired outcome is a measurable net increase in higher-paying jobs and improved social and economic well-being while maintaining a superior quality of life. While these goals are very qualitative, New North has measurable Key Performance Metrics that reinforce the organization's credibility and influence.

While highly collaborative with governmental partners, it is notable that it is strongly driven by the private sector (both in terms of funding and leadership). The general operations portion of the budget has a 6-month reserve policy designed to support existing staff and to allow for adjustments in the unlikely event of private sector cutbacks. While there are no multiyear private sector financial commitments, the budget and backup documents reveal robust and ongoing private sector support.

Organizational Leadership and Team

New North is governed by a 42-member board that meets every other month and an executive committee that meets in the alternate month. Despite its size, it is very collaborative and has significant diversity that reflects the region. It was mentioned that there is even a waiting list to serve on the Board, which is not easy to find in corporate governance! Rather than just focusing on administration, there is an effort to really engage in key programmatic issues to ensure they are using Board members' time wisely. We had the opportunity to meet several board members, and their excitement and support was well demonstrated. A particularly telling comment from the board treasurer was that they are "All-In" on everything they do.

The board oversees the work of President & CEO Barb LaMue CEcD, EDFP and a dynamic team of seasoned economic development professionals. Barb has over 25 years of senior leadership experience in economic development and previously served as Vice President of

business and community development for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC). She supervises a well-qualified team that includes Lorri LaPlatte (Office Manager and Assistant to the President), Rebecca Deschane (VP Talent Development), Renee Torzala (VP Marketing and Investor Relations), Barbara Koldos (VP Business Development), Juan Corpus (VP Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and Jason Mathwig (Industry Alliance Director). We were able to meet with almost all of them during the visit and learn about what they do daily. It was noticeably clear that there was strong respect and admiration for what each other did and support for the entire staff from the board of directors.

Organizationally, they have implemented disaster, succession, and professional development plans, financial reserves policies, and an impressive employee handbook. as well as implemented ethics training for all employees.

Strategic Plan

The organization operates with a clear, *measurable plan* surrounding what they call “Impact Pillars.” Each pillar’s (or areas of focus) progress/result is included in the regular board meeting agendas. There are four pillars:

- Business Development – Leading market diversification and business attraction while enhancing the entrepreneurial climate in the region.
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion – Improving the retention, advancement, and attraction of BIPOC talent to the region and providing opportunities for success for all historically marginalized individuals.
- Talent Development - Attracting, retaining, and developing diverse talent in Northeast Wisconsin.
- Branding & Marketing - Providing branded communication tools, collateral materials, digital assets, social media engagement, and events to build awareness of the New North and to increase the visibility of our businesses and quality of life.

Under each of these are clearly identified key performance indicators that help them track their success under each pillar.

Marketing Plans and Materials

The New North has a comprehensive marketing plan and deploys a multi-media strategy to deliver its messages. The areas of focus include:

- Launch the Livability publication in both print and digital, highlighting New North’s 20th anniversary, the attributes of our counties and special focus for the NFL Draft.
- Implement ongoing local and external earned media strategies.
- Create measurable marketing strategies and talent attraction campaigns.
- Host events to highlight the strengths of the region and provide networking opportunities for investors and stakeholders.
- Leverage expertise from regional marketing professionals through the Marketing & Branding committee, which meets regularly.

- Produce talent attraction marketing tools that can be used by our investors and local partners through our targeted campaigns: More YOU in NEW, Cool Stuff, Find your True North, and the New North Hires Heroes.
- Develop marketing campaigns to promote value and return on investment in higher education.

During the on-site visit, we spent extensive time learning more details about these and other efforts, which are really focused on telling stories (including testimonials) to connect with their intended audience. They have an active Marketing Committee (which includes a diverse, younger group) and also employ a highly competent marketing firm, Coalesce in Appleton, that helps them create both content and then deployment on the message on a multitude of media platforms (social, email, videos, YouTube, print, etc.). Some of their best practices are listed below in this document.

Budget & Financials

They operate with a strong \$2 million annual budget, with 80% coming from 150 private sector members. They do manage multiple publicly funded grants. However, they have focused their foundation and stability on a baseline of private sector funds only. This conscious fundraising strategy ensures that New North does not compete for public dollar investment which is better left to support local economic development organizations and chambers of commerce in the region. New North's fiscal and budgetary oversight and stability are laudable, with annual audits and maintenance of a six-month, private sector funding operating reserve of nearly \$1 million.

Commitment of Support

Multiple letters of support were submitted from organizations, including Wisconsin Aluminum Foundry, Bay Area Workforce Development Board, Microsoft, and Wisconsin Economic Development. A list of investors (including construction & digital alliance) and benefits programs were also provided.

During the site visit with dozens of stakeholders representing the many alliances and initiatives, the support for New North was unambiguous, palpable, and "all-in," which was heard throughout the on-site review. Support was financial, political, and a demonstrated, often articulated cooperative value of "do good and do well and "impact and return without compromise."

Major Accomplishments

Frankly, the list of recent accomplishments (quantitative and qualitative) is massive. As highlighted in the original documentation, these include the Involta data center expansion (we visited this project), Boldt manufacturing of modular temporary healthcare facilities, Project Icebox (dairy-related), and Project Neat (industrial equipment). While these are company-specific, the site visit revealed many more things that demonstrate the broad impact of their success across the region, including:

- A \$500,000 EDA grant passed through New North and the PUC to 18 member counties to each conduct a county-specific, tailor-made broadband access study and

implementation plan for the region. Community readiness and diverse targeted population access have facilitated new deployment and are attracting new business.

- Development of multiple initiatives to support DEI goals for the region. Examples include ACEL National Leadership Conference – Panel, F48 Alumni Engagement Strategy Session / Mixer, ACEL InspirASIAN Speaker Series – Sachin Shivaram, Indigenous Biz Con, Hispanic Heritage Month Roundtable, and participation in several microgrant award events.
- Hosting an educational summit to help stakeholders implement Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals.
- Deploying a multitude of talent attraction campaigns that have resulted in net migration of more than 4,000 people for three consecutive years.
- Geo Targeted workforce to attract veterans, resulting in over 200 veterans and their families locating in the region.
- Development/support of sector alliances (digital, construction, manufacturing, education, healthcare) to address industry talent needs.
- Leading the state in the number of youth apprenticeships.
- Receiving a federal grant to help address digital skilling needs in the region using artificial intelligence.

Best Practices

New North's accomplishments have several best practices whose threads weave into high impact economic development.

- **Unique Entrepreneurial Partnerships** – These involve many of the “who’s who” of the private sectors’ top and emerging leaders and their families. But most importantly, these partnerships/mentorships run wide and deep and with the diverse communities within New North. New North has cultivated partnerships with key entrepreneurial support organizations like TitledownTech (a VC firm started as a venture between Green Bay Packers and Microsoft and focused on both investment and social impact) and the Packers Mentor-Protégé program (run like an NFL draft, and Barb participates as a mentor).
- **Contract with state EDO to do business attraction** – New North receives funding from WEDC to conduct these activities on behalf of the state (response to RFIs, site readiness, local engagement) that increases resources to do the work and improves efficiency (county EDOs are happy with the setup)
- **Creative, frequent, targeted marketing** – several items to note, including regular targeted newsletters (local stories, entrepreneurial ecosystem, FDI, etc.) and specialty talent campaigns, including More YOU in NEW, Find Your True North, and New North Hires Heroes and using a paid social media influencer.
- **Stakeholder engagement in a big region** – they conduct a “virtual huddle “every two weeks with partners from throughout the region to keep them informed on everything that is happening. They feature stories from throughout the entire 18 counties in their daily digital newsletters, which demonstrate their commitment to broad collaboration. They also hold an annual summit held at Lambeau Field that attracts 600 stakeholders.

- **Digital Skilling/AI** – there are a number of initiatives that are underway to support digital skilling and use of artificial intelligence, including major investment from Microsoft (president of the company is from the region).
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives** – several key programs underway that New North is leading or supporting, including a b2b directory called WiDEN.biz, Color Bold, Forward 48 leadership program, New Boost for Hidden Talent, Blueprint 365, working with refugees, and more.
- **Tailormade Private Industry Alliances** - industry specific alliances address workforce needs, rather than a one-size fits all, government driven approach.

Recommendations

New North is doing so many things so well, so our recommendations are based more on **elevating and, yes, funding** initiatives that are already being considered/underway:

- **NFL Draft in 2025** – this is a unique economic development opportunity for the region, and we encourage an “all-hands-on-deck approach (including funding)” to ensure the impact is maximized.
- **Innovation Triangle** – support the establishment of a new entrepreneurial initiative in collaboration with Madison and Milwaukee (like the Research Triangle in North Carolina).
- **Broadband Deployment** – broadband now really needs to be everywhere like electricity; continue working regionally to help planning/deployment of more infrastructure.
- **Regional Intermodal Freight Facility Development** – utilize research being done to attract new investment in intermodal/transloading facilities that not only bring new businesses/jobs but supports existing industry.
- **Talent Attraction/Development** – continue to grow activities in this space, including expanded marketing campaigns (particularly the veterans’ program) and grow (and consider additional) industry alliances.
- **AI/Digital Skilling** – just like talent, there are a number of initiatives underway that need to be further cultivated in a time where use of AI/digital skills is critical, with the unique support of Microsoft being a huge asset for the region.
- **Maintain/Grow Funding & Political Support for New North** – The staff and board are doing outstanding work. Without tapping into reserves, be opportunistic to research, flesh out, and create the case to fund and address key economic development initiatives as they emerge or are identified.

Recommendation for Accreditation

Simply put, we believe New North to be one of the highest-performing regional economic development organizations in the country. They have a dynamic, innovative, caring, and experienced CEO in Barb LaMue CECD, EDFP, a talented, experienced, and dedicated staff, and a board of directors that is “all in” to the mission. New North operates in and nurtures a regional community that is collaborative and has no apparent silos. New North is an acknowledged pacesetter within the State of Wisconsin. They are a model to look to for best practices whose

leadership and organic constructive collaboration are palpable and inspiring to the review team. IEDC should consider highlighting New North in a case study of best regional practices and/or include New North in a member breakout session in a future event. We strongly recommend New North, Inc. receive approval by the AEDO Committee for accreditation.



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