Season's Greetings!

As another year winds down, the time comes when we need to begin to think about the future and set new goals. It is equally important to take some time to look back, celebrate the successes, and reflect on the past year. Thoughtful reflection allows us to learn from the past and can lead to more progress in the coming year. As I prepared the 2018 annual update to the Northwest Wisconsin Region’s "Vision for Prosperity" Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), I had the opportunity to inventory the year's accomplishments. The document provides an analysis of local conditions; identifies the problems, needs, and opportunities of the region; defines the vision, goals, and objectives; and designates and coordinates strategies and activities to accomplish and implement goals. In 2018, Visions Northwest took the lead on another successful RIsE Series, focusing on Placemaking and community attraction; we partnered on initiatives aimed at building our workforce, and connecting with our future talent such
as Inspire Northward, Pathways Wisconsin, and Talent Forecast. Our Wood Industry Collaborative continued to explore ways to connect the wood products industry with economic development, workforce development, and public agencies to encourage growth in investments, training, and jobs throughout the region.

In 2019, we look forward to the continued collaboration with our many partners to help Northwest Wisconsin grow and succeed!

I wish you all a magical Christmas season.

Crystal Rohde
Visions Northwest Administrator

State Broadband Director Discusses Expanding Broadband Access in Wisconsin

On November 14th, Angie Dickison, Wisconsin State Broadband Director, attended the Visions Northwest board meeting at Flat Creek Lodge in Hayward to provide a presentation on statewide broadband programs and resources. In addition to updates on the Broadband Expansion Grant program, she also discussed Broadband Forward!, Telecommuter Forward!, and provided links to broadband maps and planning tools. In five years, 138 grants equaling about $20 million have been awarded to 63 Wisconsin Counties. Within our ten-county region, $2,252,250 in grant funds have been awarded assist efforts to extend internet access.

Through its many outreach and planning efforts across the state, the Wisconsin Broadband Office encourages broadband development and deployment by certifying local communities as being Broadband Forward!. Becoming a
Broadband Forward! Community can be the first step in reducing obstacles to broadband investment. Certification can help streamline permitting processes and signal eagerness for broadband expansion. Any political subdivision (town, village, city, or county) in Wisconsin that supports and commits to promote the availability of telecommuting options is eligible for the Telecommuter Forward! Community Certification and may apply through the Public Service Commission’s Wisconsin Broadband Office.

Useful Broadband Map Links:

- All Wisconsin Broadband Office Maps  
  [https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandMaps.aspx](https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandMaps.aspx)
- Wisconsin Broadband Map  
  [https://maps.psc.wi.gov/WisconsinBroadbandMap/](https://maps.psc.wi.gov/WisconsinBroadbandMap/)
- View and Print Internet Coverage PDF Maps (County, Assembly, Senate, U.S. Congress)  
  [https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/BroadbandMaps.aspx](https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/BroadbandMaps.aspx)
- Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant Recipients  
  [https://maps.psc.wi.gov/ExpansionGrantAwardees/](https://maps.psc.wi.gov/ExpansionGrantAwardees/)
- FCC Connect America Fund (CAF)II Map  
  [https://data.usac.org/publicreports/caf-map/](https://data.usac.org/publicreports/caf-map/)
- Connect America Fund Phase II FAQS  

Visions Northwest and Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board staff are continuing deployment efforts of Inspire Northward across the region. Inspire Northward provides a direct interface between students and businesses. On Inspire, students can explore and learn about local businesses and career opportunities available in Northwest Wisconsin. Inspire is integrated with Career Cruising (career assessment and planning software) being...
used statewide by K-12 school districts as a part of their Academic and Career Planning.

We have successfully recruited over 30 businesses, 24 career coaches, and are providing 129 work-based learning activities in the region. Take a look at the link to the businesses who have signed onto the platform - if your company is not listed, what are you waiting for?

Training on the platform has began for the seven of our pilot schools across the region. Training occurred in the form of a webinar – which has been recorded for future use and can be viewed on our website at: www.inspirenorthward.org/technicalsupport - this link also provides MANY other resources for technical assistance for school districts AND employers. We anticipate to activate several of these pilot schools within the coming months.

In addition to our own regional deployment, Inspire is now "activated" statewide across all regions. Under the new collaboration, instead of only having access to local and regional resources and information, Wisconsin students, educators and businesses will be able to connect with each other regardless of their location in a secure, web-based environment called "Inspire Wisconsin". This means more than 230,000 students and 16,000 educators now have access to more than 1,600 career coaches, more than 1,200 company profiles, and nearly 5,800 work-based learning activities. More information regarding the state deployment can be found at: www.inspirewisconsin.org.

 Fabrication Laboratories Grant Program
EQUIPPING STUDENTS TO THRIVE IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

To be well prepared for the jobs of the 21st century, today's students must have access to hands-on experience and training that allows them to put into practice concepts they have learned in science, technology, engineering, art
and mathematics (STEAM) courses. Increasingly, this type of learning requires equipment such as 3D printers, laser engravers, computer numerical control routers and plasma cutters.

Through the Fabrication Laboratories (Fab Labs) Grant Program, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) is helping to outfit public schools across the state with this type of equipment, which helps students master the skills that are in high demand in the job market. Collaboration is a key feature of these labs, with schools throughout Wisconsin and around the world communicating to share ideas. Because the fab labs are required to be accessible to the community, they contribute more broadly to economic development by sparking innovation among Wisconsin entrepreneurs, inventors and small businesses.

The 2018 FabLab grant application period opened on October 8, 2018 with a deadline of December 13th, 2018. Inquiries for the program for our ten-county region can be directed to Marie Steenlage, Northwest Regional Economic Development Director, at 608.210.6755 or marie.steenlage@wedc.org.

2019 Visions Northwest Meeting Schedule

Visions Northwest meetings are typically held in Hayward at WITC. If you would like to attend a future meeting, please contact Crystal Rohde at 715.635.2197 or crohde@nwrpc.com for more information.

Wednesday, January 9th, 2019
Thomas Michels, Labor Market Economist with the Department of Workforce Development, will provide an updated overview of Wisconsin's and Northwest Wisconsin's demographics and economy.

Wednesday, April 10th, 2019
Wednesday, July 10th, 2019
Wednesday, October 9th, 2019
Visions Northwest Key Initiatives

- Infrastructure Needs Analysis and Funding
- High Potential Workforce Attraction and Retention Strategies
- Expand Wood Products Potential