

**BUSINESS  
RETENTION  
&  
EXPANSION  
Strategies  
Program**



# YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY

## Business Retention and Expansion Research Report

November 2008

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# **YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM**

## **Research Report**

**November 2008**

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for the Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program  
University of Minnesota Extension

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## Chapter I: Background on the Project

## **Chapter I. Background on the Project**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the Yellow Medicine County Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program. The first section of this chapter briefly explains the role of Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E) as an economic development strategy. The second section addresses the Yellow Medicine County BR&E Program's objectives and sponsorship and highlights the key steps involved in conducting the program. The third section includes the names of the many people involved in the Yellow Medicine County BR&E Program. The people involved in organizing the program, visiting businesses, and setting priorities are an important strength of a BR&E visitation program. The final section describes the technical and research assistance provided by the University of Minnesota Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program (U.M. BR&E).

### **Importance of Business Retention and Expansion (BR&E)**

Business Retention and Expansion has become a key element of local economic development efforts. The BR&E economic development strategy focuses on the retention and expansion of existing businesses to assist them in navigating today's global economy to develop and expand. While the attraction of new business start-ups are important parts of an overall economic development strategy, many communities now recognize that helping existing businesses to survive and grow is vital.

An expansion or contraction is defined as a change in employment to an existing plant or business location. A start-up or dissolution is defined as the creation or closing down of a separate plant or business location.<sup>1</sup> This "churning" of business creation, dissolution, expansion and contraction is a natural part of a local economy. The BR&E challenge to a community is to capture the expansions while taking preventative actions to reduce the number of dissolutions and diminish the contractions.

Commonly, more jobs are created by business expansions than by new business start-ups. Yellow Medicine County, in launching this BR&E visitation program, has the potential to improve its climate for existing business and therefore benefit from the continued presence and growth of the businesses already there.

Another benefit of a BR&E visitation program is the information provided by the survey on the community's strengths and weaknesses. The strengths can be highlighted in community promotional material, while the weaknesses give the community an opportunity to make important changes and show businesses it is responsive. By acknowledging its weaknesses, a community also shows businesses it is trustworthy and will take a realistic look at its situation.

A final benefit of a BR&E visitation program, like the one conducted in Yellow Medicine County, is how the process enhances the team of local leaders. The team is much broader than many other local economic development teams since it includes representatives from education and government in addition to business and economic development leaders. This diverse membership allows the local BR&E task force to bring in more resources, ideas, and contacts to

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development, *Business Tracking System*, December 2001.

address problems identified in the survey. Quite often, this local team will interact in addressing other community concerns that arise over time.

### **Overview of the Yellow Medicine County BR&E Program**

The Yellow Medicine County BR&E Program has seven objectives:

1. To demonstrate support for local businesses;
2. To help solve immediate business concerns;
3. To increase local businesses' ability to compete in the global economy;
4. To establish and implement a comprehensive and coordinated plan for economic development that serves all geographic areas of Yellow Medicine County (cities, townships and county) with Economic Development Authority (EDA) powers;
5. To build community capacity to sustain growth and development;
6. To promote and establish public/private partnerships on economic development projects;
7. Encourage the Yellow Medicine County EDA to establish their role and effort in partnering and complementing the economic development effort in the area.

### **Program Sponsors**

The program is sponsored by the following organizations:

Yellow Medicine County Economic Development Authority  
University of Minnesota Extension  
Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

### **Program Organization**

The Yellow Medicine County Economic Development Authority approved entering into the Business Retention and Expansion Program after being accepted into the program by the University of Minnesota Extension. The first Leadership Team meeting took place in early 2008.

### **Firm Selection**

The Leadership Team decided to target all for-profit non-home based businesses located in the county for the BR&E program. A list of all businesses meeting these criteria in Yellow Medicine County was obtained from the co-visitation coordinators on the Leadership Team and from the local phonebook. The Leadership Team attempted to be as thorough as possible in identifying local businesses for visitation. Because they are either non-profit or home-based, government entities (local, county, school district) and non-profits (churches, etc) were not included.

Out of 102 businesses targeted to participate in the Yellow Medicine County BR&E program, 72 completed the survey. This represents an overall response rate of 71%. The strong response rate is likely due to a variety of reasons, including: 1) The program's reliance on volunteer visitors,

instead of mailing the survey; 2) The involvement of community leaders, which demonstrates the program's commitment to businesses and action; 3) the promotion of the program in local media sources; and 4) the utilization of four co-visitation coordinators that allowed one individual to focus on each community within Yellow Medicine County.

### **Task Force Orientation and Volunteer Training**

On May 1, 2008, the Task Force held its first meeting. Volunteer Visitor Training was held on May 15, 2008. At these sessions, the Task Force learned about the BR&E program, reviewed the survey, and received training on how to effectively conduct the business visits.

### **Firm Visits**

From May 16 to August 1, 2008 the Task Force conducted the 72 business visits. Two members of the Task Force participated in each business visit to capture the information shared by the businesses during the visit.

### **Warning Flag Review**

After the surveys were completed and returned, the Task Force met on July 17, 2008 to review each survey and decide on how the immediate follow-up would be handled. Some of the most common individual business issues, or "warning flags," that were highlighted were: recruiting and training employees, expanding the business, and energy management. (Note, energy prices in the USA were at all time highs with oil at \$140/barrel.) Over half of the surveys indicated one or more warning flag. Three questions garnered the vast majority of interest: recruiting employees had over 20 requests, expanding, transferring, or selling the business had over 20 requests, and energy management information had in excess of 20 inquiries. Other Warning Flag issues included requests for information on internet sales, business planning, financial options, and sales training. All Warning Flags were addressed by the Co-business Resource team of Cecilia Alvarez, Jacki Anderson, Ruth Ann Karty, and Julie Redepenning.

### **Research Report Development**

The BR&E Leadership Team sent copies of the surveys to the University of Minnesota for tabulation and analysis. Liz Templin, Program Manger for the Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program from the University of Minnesota Extension, supervised the data entry. A summary of the data was prepared for the September 26, 2008 state research review meeting, where a team of twelve individuals (listed later in this section) reviewed the results and suggested projects that might respond to the businesses' needs. Brigid Tuck then drafted this report based on the input of the state research review panel and other ideas.

### **Task Force Retreat**

A four-hour retreat is scheduled for November 20, 2008. At this retreat, the Task Force will set priorities on the major projects it will implement. The Task Force is free to adopt any of the projects listed in this report, to revise and then adopt any of the projects, or to develop its own

projects. Quite often a community will do all three of these in the process of adopting a final list of three to five (or more) priority projects.

A project is not considered as a priority project unless at least three people on the Task Force are willing to take responsibility to see that steps are taken to implement it. The people who agree to work on each project do not need to be experts on the topic and can recruit others from outside the Task Force to work on the project. During the last part of the meeting, each group meets to begin planning the implementation of its project.

### **Implementation Resources Meeting**

Following the retreat, the Task Force and/or the project groups meet with individuals from outside the Task Force who might have projects similar to theirs. The group will usually ask these resource people three questions: 1) Is your group doing any work similar to our proposed project that benefits businesses in our area?; 2) If yes, what are you doing and to what degree are you reaching businesses in Yellow Medicine County?; and 3) Would you be willing to collaborate with us and/or how could our BR&E Task Force help your program? The priority projects might be modified after this meeting to account for additional resources identified.

### **Community Commencement Meeting**

This is the meeting to celebrate the end of the visitation and planning phase and the beginning of the implementation phase. This should be a community-wide event. All of the Task Force members, volunteer visitors, local media and the businesses are invited. Other local government, business, and community leaders are also invited, as well as regional and state agency representatives and members of the community.

### **Quarterly Implementation Meetings**

After the community commencement meeting, the Task Force meets quarterly to discuss progress on the projects and how they might overlap. Each project work group reports on their progress and solicits input from other Task Force members. Often, Task Force members from outside a project work group are able to troubleshoot by offering useful suggestions or assisting in some aspect of the project. They also can encourage fellow Task Force members to sustain forward momentum toward accomplishment of the stated goals.

## **People Involved in the Yellow Medicine County BR&E Program**

Three groups of people have been very important to Yellow Medicine County's success to date in its BR&E visitation program. These include: 1) the Leadership Team, 2) the Task Force, and 3) the businesses visited.

### **Yellow Medicine County BR&E Leadership Team**

The Leadership Team coordinates the BR&E program as well as participating in everything including business visits. Specifically, the team initiated and secured funding for the program,

recruited the Task Force, identified businesses, and coordinated the visits. They also organized training for the visitors, conducted a practice visit to test the survey, and coordinated a red flag review process regarding businesses' immediate concerns. In addition, some of the team members participated in the state review panel at the University of Minnesota and coordinated the Task Force retreat. The team will lead the group into the implementation phase once the retreat is completed. In addition, the Leadership Team is considered part of the Task Force.

### **BR&E Leadership Team**

Ryan Krosch, Overall Coordinator and Co-Visitation Coordinator, Yellow Medicine County Administrator

Amy Redepenning, Meeting Coordinator, Yellow Medicine County Administrative Secretary

Scott Tedrick, Media Coordinator, Granite Falls Advocate Tribune

Diane Miller, Co-Visitation Coordinator, Canby City Administrator

Dennis Van Hoof, Co-Visitation Coordinator, Granite Falls Economic Development Director

David Biermaier, Co-Visitation Coordinator, Clarkfield City Council

Cecilia Alvarez, Co-Business Resources Coordinator, Entrepreneur's Assistance Network

Jacki Anderson, Co-Business Resources Coordinator, Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission

Ruth Ann Karty, Co-Business Resources Coordinator, Small Business Development Center

Julie Redepenning, Co-Business Resources Coordinator, Business Services – Department of Employment and Economic Development

### **Yellow Medicine County BR&E Task Force**

Many community members participated as Task Force members. This group addressed the red flag issues, will set priorities for action, and will lead implementation of selected projects. Task Force members also participated in business visits.

Cecilia Alvarez, Entrepreneur's Assistance Network

Jacki Anderson, Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission

Ron Antony, Yellow Medicine County, Commissioner

Brian Barber, Granite Falls Community Leader

David Biermaier, City of Clarkfield, Council Member

Roselyn Biermaier, University of Minnesota Extension

Richard Blackwelder, City of Canby, Mayor

Elroy Burgeson, Granite Falls Community Leader

Joe Fagnano, Granite Falls Community Leader

Loren Hacker, Canby Public Schools

Richard Hagen, City of Hanley Falls, Mayor

Robin Henderson, Granite Falls Community Leader

Ian Hodge, Clarkfield Community Leader

Jerome Hoffman, Clarkfield Community Leader

Ruth Ann Karty, Small Business Development Center

Kathy Kittelson, City of Clarkfield Administrator  
Ryan Krosch, Yellow Medicine County Administrator  
Angela Leppke, Canby Community Leader  
Paul Luitjens, Clarkfield Community Leader  
Diane Miller, City of Canby – Administrator  
Andrea Mills, Minnesota West Community and Technical College  
David Nelson, University of Minnesota Extension  
Brenda Ohlson, Clarkfield Community Leader  
Jan Pederson, Canby Community Leader  
Amy Redepenning, Yellow Medicine County Administrative Secretary  
Julie K. Redepenning, Business Services – Department of Employment and Economic Development  
Evelyn Regnier, Canby Community Leader  
Jane Remiger, Yellow Medicine County, Commissioner  
Nicole Richter, Granite Falls Chamber of Commerce – Director  
Patty Savoie, City of Hanley Falls  
Dave Smiglewski, City of Granite Falls, Mayor  
Karin Tank, Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission  
Scott Tedrick, Grantie Falls Advocate Tribune  
Dennis Van Hoof, City of Granite Falls, Economic Development Director  
John Virnig, Granite Falls Bank - President  
Rebecca Weber, Canby Community Leader  
Sherman Winson, Clarkfield Community Leader

### **Businesses Visited as Part of the Yellow Medicine County BR&E Program**

The following 72 businesses graciously agreed to be interviewed as part of the BR&E visitation:

1st Security Bank  
A New Leaf  
Bailey's Print Wear  
Blackjack Express  
Bootlegger's Supper Club  
Bruflat Plumbing  
Canby Builders Supply  
Canby Home Bakery  
Canby Print Shop  
Canby Theater  
Casey's General Store  
Casualty Assurance  
Clarkfield Care Center  
Clarkfield Enterprises  
Clarkfield Hardware Hank  
Consumer Coop Oil Co.  
Co-Op Credit Union  
Cottonwood Co-Op Oil Co.

Dairy Queen  
DeToy's Family Restaurant, Canby  
DeToy's Family Restaurant, Granite Falls  
Economart  
EPCOS  
Equity Elevator Trading Co.  
F & M Agency  
F & M Bank  
Family Foods  
Farmer's Co-Op Association  
Farmer's Co-op Elevator, Echo  
Farmer's Co-op Elevator, Hanley Falls  
Filling Station  
First Minnesota Realty  
Friendship Café  
Granite Falls Advocate Tribune  
Granite Falls Energy  
Granite Fluid Power  
Hoffco Inc.  
Jim's Market  
Korthuis Jewelry  
Loe Lettering  
M2K H2O, Inc.  
Marr Valve Company  
Martin Marietta Aggregates  
Midway Café  
Minnesota Feed Distributors  
MVTV Wireless  
Outland Renewable Energy  
P.K Egans  
Par Piping  
Pichts Auto Body  
Prairie Grain Partners  
Rainbow Day Care  
REM  
Renew Styling Parlor  
Runnings  
Sanford (Sioux Valley)  
Sight Sound & Body  
Specialty Systems  
Sunsorce Inc.  
Super Motel of Granite Falls  
Taking Care of Business Consulting  
The Ink Spot  
The Pizza Place  
The Sawmill Builder's Supply

Tjosvold Equipment Inc  
United Petroleum  
Uptown Glamour  
Valhalla Apartments  
Valley Troll  
Velde Sanitation  
Vlaminck Electric  
Willie's Corner Store

### **Assistance from the University of Minnesota and Other Organizations**

University of Minnesota Extension staff has helped over fifty communities, counties, or clusters of cities or counties to implement BR&E visitation programs. Using research on earlier BR&E programs, Extension developed the approach used in the Yellow Medicine County program. This approach has also been used in hundreds of communities across the United States, Canada and Australia. Business Retention and Expansion International (BREI) adopted this approach for the training professionals who wish to guide communities through BR&E visitation programs. The University of Minnesota and other organizations are providing the Yellow Medicine County BR&E program with a variety of technical assistance, which is highlighted below.

- David Nelson, University of Minnesota Extension, is serving as BR&E consultant for the Yellow Medicine County BR&E program. This includes coaching and advising the local Leadership Team, conducting Volunteer Visitor training with the Leadership Team, assisting the Leadership Team in business selection, facilitating the Warning Flags review meetings, and participating in the State Review Panel. Brigid Tuck, University of Minnesota Extension, and Cameron Macht, Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development, then prepared this research report, which will be presented at the Task Force retreat on November 20, 2008. Liz Templin, University of Minnesota Extension will facilitate the Task Force retreat. Brigid Tuck will also prepare a summary report based on the Task Force's selected priorities. University of Minnesota BR&E will provide the local team with 100 copies of the summary report for distribution in the community.
- University of Minnesota BR&E provided the local team with training materials including manuals, survey instrument, videos, and overheads. After consultation with the Leadership Team and the University, and testing with business visits, the Yellow Medicine County BR&E Task Force adopted the survey instrument.
- Liz Templin supervised the survey data input and tabulation. Michael Darger of University of Minnesota Extension conducted the State Review Panel meeting.
- The cities, the county, and the townships of Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, University of Minnesota Extension, and organizations provided in-kind staff to plan and conduct this BR&E program.

- Cash to pay the University of Minnesota BR&E fee for this program was provided by the Yellow Medicine County Economic Development Authority as represented by the Yellow Medicine County Board.

### **State Review Panel**

The state review panel included a team of twelve individuals, including university faculty, state agency representatives, and a Yellow Medicine County Task Force member. The panel reviewed the survey data and suggested actions the community might pursue to address businesses' concerns and needs. Panel members also provided information on programs and resources available to help the community meet the needs of local businesses. A list of participants in the state review panel meeting follows.

### **State Review Panel Members**

Erik Aamoth, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development  
John Bennett, University of Minnesota Extension, Community Economics  
Michael Darger, Business Retention & Expansion Strategies Program, U. of MN Extension  
Rachel Hillman, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development  
Lisa Hughes, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development  
Laura Kalambokidis, University of Minnesota, Department of Applied Economics  
Ryan Krosch, Yellow Medicine County  
Neil Linscheid, University of Minnesota Extension, Community Economics  
Elton Mykerezi, University of Minnesota, Department of Applied Economics  
David Nelson, University of Minnesota Extension, Community Economics  
Liz Templin, University of Minnesota Extension, Community Economics  
Brigid Tuck, University of Minnesota Extension, Community Economics

## Chapter II: A Brief Profile of Yellow Medicine County: Economy and Demographics

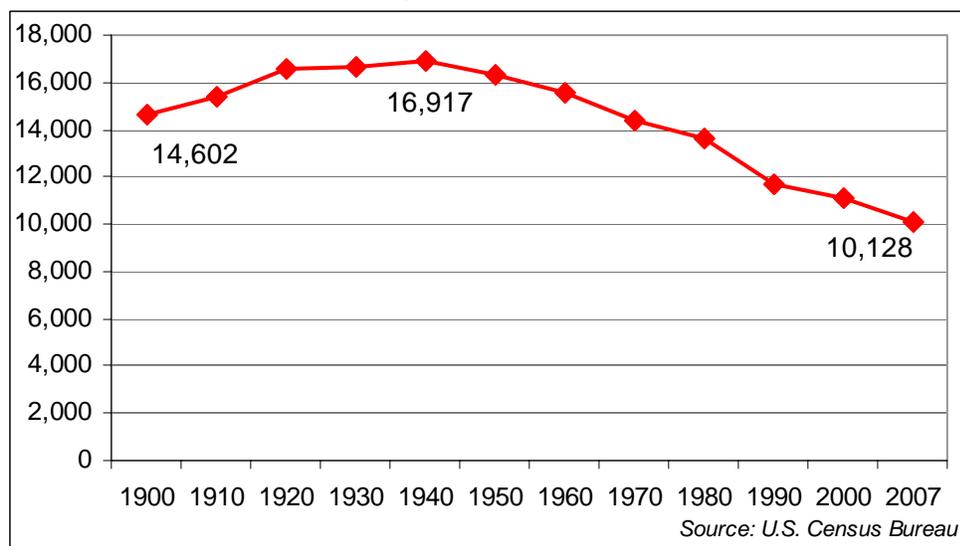
## Chapter II. A Brief Profile of Yellow Medicine County: Economy and Demographics

Yellow Medicine County is a small, rural county located in Southwest Minnesota, with the western edge touching the South Dakota border. Like many of the surrounding counties, Yellow Medicine's population has been declining over the last 60 to 70 years. However, despite the declining population and the national economic slowdown, Yellow Medicine County's economy is still adding jobs, especially in major industries like construction, manufacturing, and healthcare and social assistance. Yellow Medicine County has lower wages and lower household incomes than the state, but incomes have been increasing in recent years. While the region's labor force has declined, new jobs have been created, lowering the county's unemployment rate and increasing commuting within the region. Overall, education attainment levels are significantly lower than the state.

### Population

After peaking at 16,917 in the 1940 Census, the population in Yellow Medicine County has been declining steadily for the last seven decades, ending 2007 with 10,128 people. In 1940, Yellow Medicine was larger (in population) than 38 of the 87 counties in Minnesota; by 2000, it was larger than 19 counties. Over that time frame, it dropped from the 49<sup>th</sup> largest county in the state to the 68<sup>th</sup> largest county. From 1940 through 1980, the county lost about 1,000 people per decade. But from 1980 to 1990, Yellow Medicine's population dropped nearly 2,000 people; and through 2007, it has declined another -1,500 people. See Chart 2-1.

**CHART 2-1: POPULATION, 1900 to 2007**



Nearly 82 percent of the population lived in rural areas, while the remaining 18 percent lived inside urban clusters. The largest cities in Yellow Medicine County include Granite Falls (which is partly in Chippewa County), which had 2,890 people in 2007, and Canby, with 1,735 people in 2007. The only other city in the county with more than 500 people was Clarkfield, with 849 people in 2007. From 2000 to 2007, only one city or township in Yellow Medicine County has gained population: the city of St. Leo. The remaining 30 cities and townships all declined between -7 percent and -53 percent, while the county overall declined -8.6 percent from 2000 to 2007. See Table 2-1.

**TABLE 2-1: POPULATION CHANGE, 2000 to 2007**

<b>Geography</b>	<b>2007 Population</b>	<b>2000 Population</b>	<b>2000-2007 Change</b>
Granite Falls city	2,890	3,070	-5.9%
Canby city	1,735	1,903	-8.8%
Clarkfield city	849	944	-10.1%
Stony Run township	503	544	-7.5%
Wood Lake city	388	436	-11.0%
Minnesota Falls township	332	361	-8.0%
<b>Yellow Medicine County</b>	<b>10,128</b>	<b>11,080</b>	<b>-8.6%</b>
Chippewa County	12,465	13,088	-4.8%
Lac qui Parle County	7,258	8,067	-10.0%
Lincoln County	5,877	6,429	-8.6%
Lyon County	24,695	25,425	-2.9%
Redwood County	15,519	16,815	-7.7%
Renville County	16,132	17,154	-6.0%
Minnesota	5,197,621	4,919,479	5.7%
United States	301,621,157	281,421,906	7.2%
<i>Source: U.S. Census Bureau</i>			

The demographic shifts occurring in Yellow Medicine County are similar to what is happening in other surrounding counties in Southwest Minnesota. Of the six Minnesota counties that border Yellow Medicine, only Lyon County has more people now than it did in 1960. All six saw population declines from 2000 to 2007, with Lac qui Parle suffering a 10 percent drop. In contrast, the population in the state of Minnesota and, the United States as a whole, is still growing. From 2000 to 2007, Minnesota's population expanded 5.7 percent, or just over 275,000 people. See Table 2-1.

As the county's population has declined, it has also gotten older. The median age in Yellow Medicine County was 40.4 years in 2000, which was five years older than the state of Minnesota (35.4 years). Just under 26 percent of the county's population was under 18 years of age; while 23.3 percent of the population was aged 62 years and over. The aging of the baby boom generation has created a surge in the number of people in their 50s, while increasing life expectancy has added to the number of people aged 65 years and over. Through 2035, the fastest growing age group in Yellow Medicine County are projected to be 65 years and over, reflecting the sheer size of the baby boom generation. See Table 2-2.

**TABLE 2-2: POPULATION PROJECTIONS, 2005 to 2035**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2005-2035 % Change</b>
0-14 years	1,969	2,060	1,910	-3.0%
15-24 years	1,352	1,110	1,140	-15.7%
25-34 years	948	820	740	-21.9%
35-44 years	1,362	1,000	890	-34.7%
45-54 years	1,682	1,110	1,060	-37.0%
55-64 years	1,141	1,560	1,050	-8.0%
65 years & over	2,100	2,310	2,850	35.7%
Total	10,554	9,970	9,600	-9.0%
<i>Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center</i>				

## Industry Employment

Through the first quarter of 2008, there were 365 business establishments supplying 4,684 covered jobs in Yellow Medicine County. Contrary to many other areas of the state and nation, the economy in Yellow Medicine County is still expanding. In fact, from 2006 to 2007, Yellow Medicine added 216 net new covered jobs, primarily due to gains in construction, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and other services. The largest industries in the county include health care and social assistance (although private sector data for this industry is not discloseable), educational services, construction, manufacturing, and retail trade. See Table 2-3.

While the state of Minnesota lost more than -7,100 covered jobs in construction from 2006 to 2007, Yellow Medicine County actually added 107 net new construction jobs, a 34.7 percent increase. The largest area of growth in the industry has been in construction of buildings, where job counts have jumped nearly 600 percent since 2000. Likewise, Minnesota manufacturers have shed more than -4,500 jobs over the last year; yet Yellow Medicine gained 27 net new manufacturing jobs, an 8.1 percent expansion. The largest sector was fabricated metal product manufacturing, where jobs increased 11 percent over the last five years.

With 77 firms and 1,236 jobs, the city of Canby had 27 percent of total countywide employment. That included nearly 36 percent of the retail trade jobs, and 31 percent of the educational services jobs. The city of Granite Falls had 139 firms and 1,947 covered jobs, which was 42.5 percent of total countywide jobs. Just under half (47.8 percent) of the county's educational services jobs were in Granite Falls, as well as 407 jobs in health care and social assistance, 179 jobs in public administration, and 182 jobs in retail trade (50.3 percent of county total).

**TABLE 2-3: CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT, 2006 to 2007**

Industry	2007 Annual Data				2006-2007 Data		
	Number of Firms	Number of Jobs	Percent of Total Jobs	Avg. Annual Wage	Numeric Change in Jobs	Percent Change in Jobs	Percent Change in Wages
Total, All Industries	362	4,585	100.0%	\$30,732	216	4.9%	9.6%
Educational Services ( <i>government</i> )	12	487	10.6%	\$31,044	-17	-3.4%	4.6%
Construction	40	415	9.1%	\$66,456	107	34.7%	20.6%
Manufacturing	19	362	7.9%	\$33,540	27	8.1%	14.4%
Retail Trade	49	362	7.9%	\$15,652	-2	-0.5%	-4.4%
Health Care & Social Asst. ( <i>gov't</i> )	2	332	7.2%	\$27,612	7	2.2%	0.2%
Wholesale Trade	21	244	5.3%	\$36,608	9	3.8%	2.2%
Accommodation & Food Services	23	193	4.2%	\$8,268	-5	-2.5%	-1.9%
Transp. & Warehousing ( <i>private</i> )	27	120	2.6%	\$29,276	ND	ND	ND
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin.	31	105	2.3%	\$21,372	16	18.0%	26.9%
Finance & Insurance	24	98	2.1%	\$37,752	-11	-10.1%	11.7%
Professional & Technical Services	14	70	1.5%	\$46,488	6	9.4%	-2.3%
Administrative & Waste Services	12	60	1.3%	\$33,852	9	17.6%	80.8%
Information	7	19	0.4%	\$30,784	0	0.0%	1.7%
Arts, Entertainment, & Rec. ( <i>private</i> )	5	19	0.4%	\$9,724	4	26.7%	9.4%
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	4	9	0.2%	\$21,268	1	12.5%	35.0%

*Source: DEED, Quarterly Census of Employment & Wages (QCEW)*

## Wages

Yellow Medicine County businesses paid out nearly \$33.8 million dollars in total wages in 2007. This represented \$3.4 million in growth from payroll in 2006, an 11.2 percent rise. Overall, average annual wages increased by 9.6 percent in Yellow Medicine County between 2006 and 2007. In comparison, wages gained 5.2 percent statewide. While wages were growing faster in Yellow Medicine County, average annual wages were only 69.3 percent of the comparable state wage (\$30,732 vs. \$44,356). The highest paying industries in Yellow Medicine County are construction, professional and technical services, and finance and insurance. See Table 2-3.

## Self-Employment

In addition to the industries detailed above, Yellow Medicine County is also home to a large number of self-employed establishments without payroll subject to federal income tax, also known as “nonemployers.” Yellow Medicine County had 779 nonemployer establishments in 2006, with the highest number of self-employed businesses found in other services (including personal and laundry services, like beauty salons, and automotive repair and maintenance); construction (most notably in specialty trade contractors); retail trade (including car dealers and miscellaneous store retailers); and health care and social assistance (primarily in day care services). See Table 2-4.

**TABLE 2-4: NONEMPLOYER DATA, 2006**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Number of Establishments</b>	<b>Receipts (\$1,000s)</b>
Total, All Industries	779	\$24,623
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin.	164	\$4,012
Construction	119	\$4,231
Retail Trade	89	\$4,086
Health Care & Social Assistance	82	\$1,383
Transportation & Warehousing	59	\$5,413
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	49	\$712
Admin. Support & Waste Mgmt. Services	44	\$482
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	40	\$1,882
Finance and Insurance	33	\$754
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	28	\$269
Forestry, Fishing & Hunting, and Agriculture	20	\$342
Manufacturing	16	\$495
Wholesale Trade	12	\$314
Educational Services	12	\$58
Accommodation & Food Services	6	\$88
Information	5	\$96

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 Nonemployer Statistics*

## Farming and Agriculture

Yellow Medicine County also is home to 989 farms, which produced \$138.9 million in market value of agricultural products sold in 2002, according to the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Just over two thirds (67.5 percent) of the farm owners considered farming their primary occupation. Nearly 450,000 acres were in farms, with 32.8 percent of the farms now working on 500 acres or more. The average farm size was 453 acres, and just 23.9 percent of the farms were farming less than 50 acres.

## Income and Earnings

As Yellow Medicine County's economy grows, so too does the county's median household income (MHI). Often used as a comparative measure of economic health, MHI in Yellow Medicine County in 2005 was \$38,613, which was about \$13,500 less than the state's median household income (\$52,048). However, Yellow Medicine County saw a 5.9 percent increase from 2000, which matched the increase statewide. Surrounding counties, especially those that larger economies – like Lyon County (Marshall), Redwood County (Redwood Falls), and Renville County– had a higher MHI, although Yellow Medicine did have the fourth fastest rate of MHI growth in the area between 2000 and 2005. See Table 2-5.

**TABLE 2-5: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 2005**  
**Gross Percentage Changes**

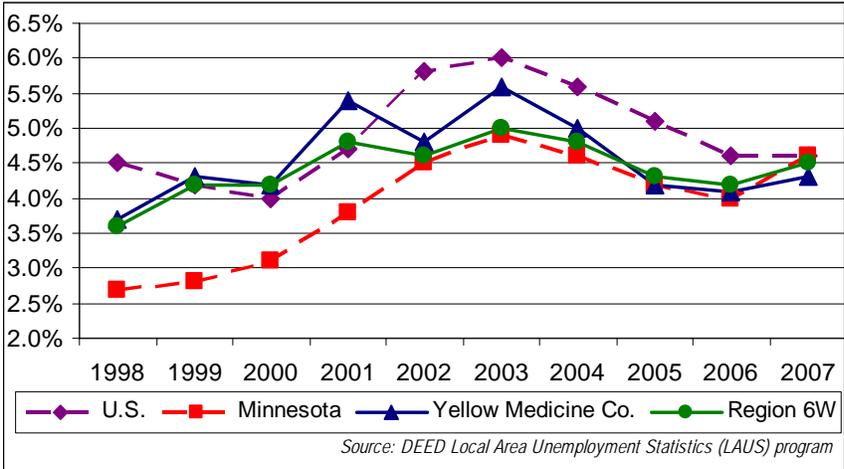
County	2005	2000	1995	1995-2005 % Change	2000-2005 % Change
<b>Yellow Medicine Co.</b>	<b>\$38,613</b>	<b>\$36,473</b>	<b>\$29,845</b>	<b>29.4%</b>	<b>5.9%</b>
Chippewa Co.	\$39,154	\$37,882	\$31,106	25.9%	3.4%
Lac qui Parle Co.	\$38,041	\$34,787	\$28,231	34.7%	9.4%
Lincoln Co.	\$35,083	\$33,230	\$24,614	42.5%	5.6%
Lyon Co.	\$42,124	\$40,887	\$33,972	24.0%	3.0%
Redwood Co.	\$43,281	\$39,182	\$31,005	39.6%	10.5%
Renville Co.	\$44,057	\$39,581	\$31,247	41.0%	11.3%
Minnesota	\$52,048	\$49,170	\$37,483	38.9%	5.9%
United States	\$46,242	\$41,990	\$34,076	35.7%	10.1%

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates*

## Unemployment Rates

The combination of a declining population and a growing economy has led to a tightening labor market in Yellow Medicine County in recent years. In 2007, Yellow Medicine ended the year with a 4.3 percent unemployment rate, which was lower than the state rate (4.6%) for the first time in the last ten years. While Minnesota's unemployment rate has risen two percent since 1998, Yellow Medicine's rate is up only half a percent, and is now lower than the U.S. rate as well. Likewise, the unemployment rate of Region 6W, which includes Yellow Medicine, Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, and Swift counties, also recently dropped below the state's unemployment rate. See Chart 2-2.

**CHART 2-2: ANNUAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATES, 1998 to 2007**



In the shadow of a looming national economic slowdown, unemployment rates in the region and Yellow Medicine County have increased. It is also important to note that the size of the labor force in Yellow Medicine County and in surrounding counties has decreased along with population declines since 2000. The total labor force in Yellow Medicine and its bordering counties was -2,394 people smaller in August of 2008 than in August of 2000. In addition to a labor force shortage, the region is also facing a skill shortage. See Table 2-6.

**TABLE 2-6: LOCAL AREA UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS, August 2008**

County	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemp. Rate	Percent Change in Labor Force Since 2000
<b>Yellow Medicine Co.</b>	<b>5,687</b>	<b>5,369</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>
Chippewa Co.	7,081	6,698	383	5.4%	-0.4%
Lac qui Parle Co.	3,932	3,732	200	5.1%	-2.6%
Lincoln Co.	3,159	3,005	154	4.9%	-11.8%
Lyon Co.	14,112	13,448	664	4.7%	-5.1%
Redwood Co.	8,378	7,888	490	5.8%	-7.8%
Renville Co.	8,725	8,201	524	6.0%	-4.0%
Minnesota	2,961,684	2,790,183	171,501	5.6%	4.7%

Source: DEED, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS)

**Workforce Demographics**

As noted above, population trends in Yellow Medicine County are leading to an aging workforce. As the front end of the baby boom generation starts reaching retirement age in 2011, older workers will be counted on to stay in the labor force longer than in the past to fill employer needs. Because of population declines, newer entrants into the workforce—those 16-24 years old—are projected to slow between 2005 and 2035 in Yellow Medicine County. Likewise, the 25- to 44-year old age group is not expected to grow, and the 45- to 64-year old age group will start declining especially as the baby boom generation moves toward retirement age. The fastest growing age group in the labor force is aged 65 years and over. See Table 2-7.

**TABLE 2-7: LABOR FORCE PROJECTIONS, 2005 to 2035**

Labor Force Type	2005	2020	2035	2005-2035 Percent Change
Total labor force	5,450	4,860	4,280	-21.5%
16-24 years	850	630	650	-23.5%
25-44 years	2,070	1,630	1,450	-30.0%
45-64 years	2,290	2,170	1,740	-24.0%
65 years & over	250	420	440	76.0%

Source: Minnesota State Demographic Center

### Commute and Labor Sheds

Yellow Medicine County is a net exporter of labor, having more employed residents than jobs. In 2006, 2,714 workers who lived in Yellow Medicine County drove into other counties for work; while 1,677 workers from surrounding counties commuted into Yellow Medicine County for work. Yellow Medicine had a labor deficit of 586 workers with Lyon County, as 801 Yellow Medicine residents drove to Lyon County for work but only 255 workers came the other direction. Likewise, Chippewa County draws 131 more workers from Yellow Medicine than the reverse, while the labor exchange is more even with Redwood, Renville, Kandiyohi, and Deuel County, South Dakota. Commute times are still relatively short for workers in the county, as most workers stay within the region for their jobs. However, some workers drive into the Twin Cities metro area or the Mankato-North Mankato area for work, presumably for higher paying, higher skilled jobs that aren't available in the immediate region. See Table 2-8.

**TABLE 2-8: COMMUTE AND LABOR SHED REPORT, 2006**

Where Workers Who Are Employed in Yellow Medicine County Live			Where Workers Who Live in Yellow Medicine County Work		
Residence County	Count of Workers	Percent Share	Workplace County	Count of Workers	Percent Share
<b>Yellow Medicine Co.</b>	<b>2,519</b>	<b>60.0%</b>	<b>Yellow Medicine Co.</b>	<b>2,519</b>	<b>48.1%</b>
Chippewa Co.	455	10.8%	Lyon Co.	841	16.1%
Lyon Co.	255	6.1%	Chippewa Co.	586	11.2%
Renville Co.	185	4.4%	Ramsey Co.	116	2.2%
Rock Co.	130	3.1%	Redwood Co.	115	2.2%
Redwood Co.	123	2.9%	Hennepin Co.	111	2.1%
Lac qui Parle Co.	109	2.6%	Blue Earth Co.	101	1.9%
Lincoln Co.	70	1.7%	Renville Co.	96	1.8%
Kandiyohi Co.	66	1.6%	Kandiyohi Co.	93	1.8%
Deuel Co., So. Dakota	30	0.7%	Deuel Co., So. Dakota	68	1.3%
All Other Counties	254	6.1%	All Other Counties	587	11.2%
<b>Total Workforce</b>	<b>4,196</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>Total Workforce</b>	<b>5,233</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program

### Occupations of Southwest Minnesota Workers

The largest occupation group in Region 6W, which includes Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine counties, is office and administrative support occupations. Significant numbers of individuals are also employed in production occupations; health care practitioners and technical

occupations; sales and related occupations; education, training, and library occupations; food preparation and serving related occupations; and transportation and material moving occupations.

The highest-paying jobs are typically found in management; life, physical, and social science occupations; architecture and engineering occupations; legal occupations; business and financial operations occupations; computer and mathematical occupations; and healthcare practitioners and technical occupations, which require higher levels of education and experience. The lowest paying jobs are concentrated in food preparation and serving, retail sales, and personal care. See Table 2-9.

**TABLE 2-9: ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT & WAGES, 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr. 2008**

SOC Occupational Title	Region 6W		State of Minnesota	
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Employment	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$13.22	18,010	\$17.09	2,687,740
Office & Administrative Support Occupations	\$12.36	2,580	\$15.45	433,440
Production Occupations	\$13.00	1,740	\$15.29	233,080
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical Occupations	\$20.55	1,370	\$28.93	147,650
Sales & Related Occupations	\$9.24	1,370	\$12.28	276,300
Education, Training, & Library Occupations	\$18.66	1,310	\$20.51	150,320
Food Preparation & Serving Related Occupations	\$8.27	1,290	\$9.14	220,910
Transportation & Material Moving Occupations	\$12.91	1,240	\$14.31	173,620
Construction & Extraction Occupations	\$17.13	930	\$23.56	109,800
Business & Financial Operations Occupations	\$21.83	910	\$26.41	154,590
Healthcare Support Occupations	\$10.71	820	\$12.78	84,010
Management Occupations	\$31.74	790	\$44.55	133,760
Protective Service Occupations	\$13.75	600	\$17.23	47,670
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair Occupations	\$16.94	600	\$20.26	91,530
Community & Social Services Occupations	\$14.31	510	\$17.95	50,950
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maint. Occupations	\$10.55	480	\$11.64	80,840
Personal Care & Service Occupations	\$9.67	370	\$11.22	82,360
Architecture & Engineering Occupations	\$22.48	300	\$30.09	51,910
Computer & Mathematical Occupations	\$20.63	290	\$34.46	77,660
Life, Physical, & Social Science Occupations	\$22.87	200	\$28.72	29,500
Arts, Design, Entertain, Sports, & Media Occupations	\$11.29	160	\$20.97	36,040
Legal Occupations	\$22.04	90	\$35.67	18,090
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry Occupations	\$11.73	50	\$12.86	3,700

Source: DEED, Occupational Employment Statistics (OES), 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2008

### Educational Attainment

Educational attainment can be used as a measure of the quality of the resident labor force. Rankings often place Minnesota near the top in terms of the skills of the working-age population. For instance, Minnesota placed 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the number of residents 25 years and older holding a bachelor's degree or higher in 2005 (30.7 percent). Yellow Medicine County has lower educational attainment than the state of Minnesota, but similar rates for workers with an associate degree. Overall, about 14.4 percent of the population aged 25 years and over in Yellow Medicine County had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, well below the state's average. But 32.3 percent of the population had attended some college or earned an associate degree, which was slightly higher than comparable state percentage (31.7

percent). Looking at educational attainment among younger age groups also provides a different story, as many of the county's older population did not have access to the same education opportunities as the current generation. See Table 2-10.

**TABLE 2-10: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2000**  
**Population Age 25 or Older**

City or County	High School Diploma	Some College, No Degree	Associate Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
<b>Yellow Medicine Co.</b>	<b>81.9%</b>	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>14.4%</b>
Chippewa County	81.6%	23.8%	6.5%	13.7%
Lac qui Parle County	80.8%	22.6%	7.6%	13.0%
Lincoln County	79.8%	20.6%	6.5%	14.1%
Lyon County	82.6%	21.7%	7.0%	21.4%
Redwood County	80.2%	23.9%	5.9%	13.4%
Renville County	80.9%	22.7%	7.6%	12.6%
<b>Minnesota</b>	<b>87.9%</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>27.4%</b>

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

This chapter has examined the demographics and industries of Yellow Medicine County to provide context for the Business Retention and Expansion survey analysis. Chapter 3 will analyze survey data and offer potential strategies and projects that respond to that data.

## Chapter III: BR&E Survey Results, Strategies, and Potential Projects

### **Chapter III. BR&E Survey Results, Strategies, and Potential Projects**

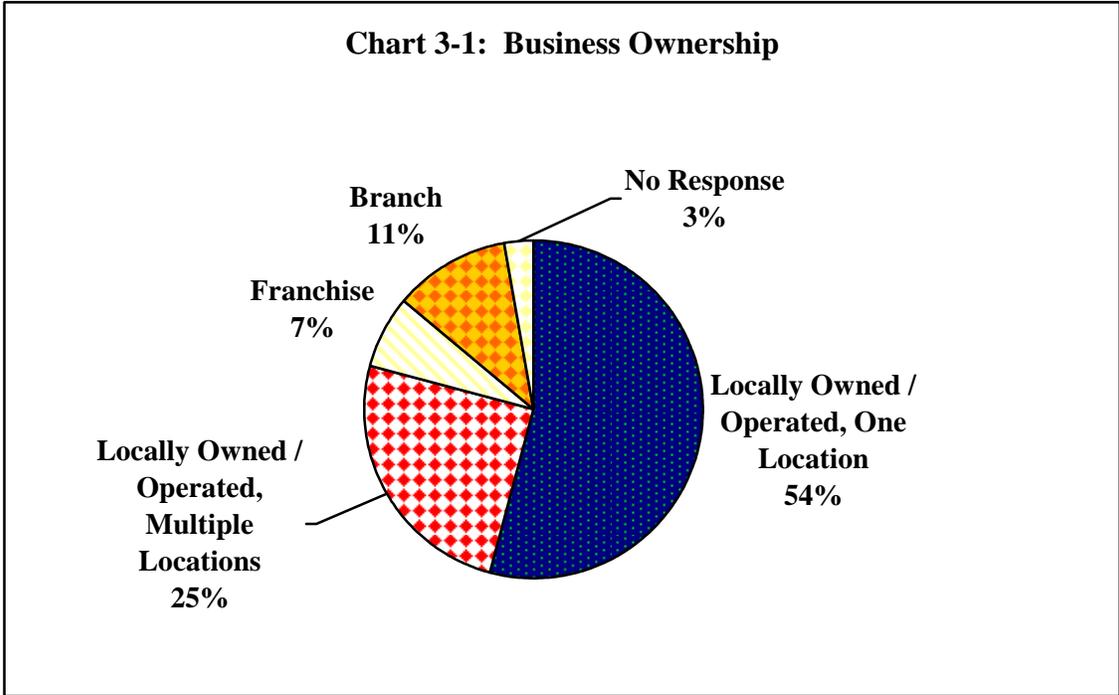
This chapter presents the survey results from the 72 businesses visited by the Yellow Medicine County Leadership Team and Task Force in June, July and August of 2008. First, the types of businesses visited and their characteristics are outlined. Second, four different strategies for addressing the issues and opportunities of these businesses are outlined. Under each strategy, the survey results relevant to that strategy are reported and a set of potential local projects is given. The potential local projects were developed at a University of Minnesota meeting of economic development professionals and University applied economists held on September 26, 2008 and by the author. The final priorities will be set at the November 20, 2008 retreat of the local Task Force. The Task Force might use the suggested projects, they might modify them, or they might adopt new projects developed locally. Only the top three to five priority projects will be included in the summary report for implementation. Other projects will be handled if time and resources permit.

#### **Characteristics of Businesses Visited**

Seventy-two businesses were visited by the participants in the BR&E program. A list of all businesses in Yellow Medicine County was obtained from the co-visitation coordinators on the Leadership Team and from the local phonebook. The Leadership Team decided to target for-profit, non-home based businesses located in the county for the BR&E program. Therefore, government entities (local, county, school district) and non-profits (churches, etc) were not included. All identified businesses meeting these criteria were invited to participate in the program.

Of the 102 businesses targeted, 72 completed the visits for an overall response rate of 71 percent. This is a strong response rate. Several factors most likely contributed to the high response rate including: 1) the program's reliance on visitors, instead of mailing the survey; 2) the involvement of community leaders, which demonstrates the program's commitment to businesses and action; 3) the promotion of the program in local media sources; and 4) the utilization of four co-visitation coordinators that allowed one individual to focus on each community within Yellow Medicine County.

Seventy-nine percent of the visited businesses are locally owned and operated. Of those, 25 percent have more than one location. The majority of those other locations are in Minnesota. Eleven percent of the businesses are a branch location of a regional, national or international company. Finally, 7 percent of the businesses are franchises. This breakdown is illustrated in Chart 3-1.



Businesses were asked to indicate which industry category best described their business. Twenty-two percent of businesses indicated they were involved in retail trade, 14 percent in food and beverage, and 14 percent in manufacturing. A list of the categories and firm responses is shown in Table 3-1.<sup>1</sup> Businesses could select more than one category based on the products and services they provide.

**Table 3-1: Businesses by Industry Category**

Industry	Number of Businesses	Percent of Businesses
Retail Trade	16	22%
Food and Beverage	10	14%
Manufacturing	10	14%
Other	10	14%
Other Services	9	13%
Agricultural Production	8	11%
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	6	8%
Wholesale Trade	3	4%
Construction	3	4%
Mining	1	1%
Lodging	1	1%
Transportation and Utilities	1	1%

The businesses visited in Yellow Medicine County employ a total of 1,091 full-time employees and 543 part-time employees. The businesses employ a trimmed mean (or

<sup>1</sup> Some categories had no firms responding and these categories were not included in the table.

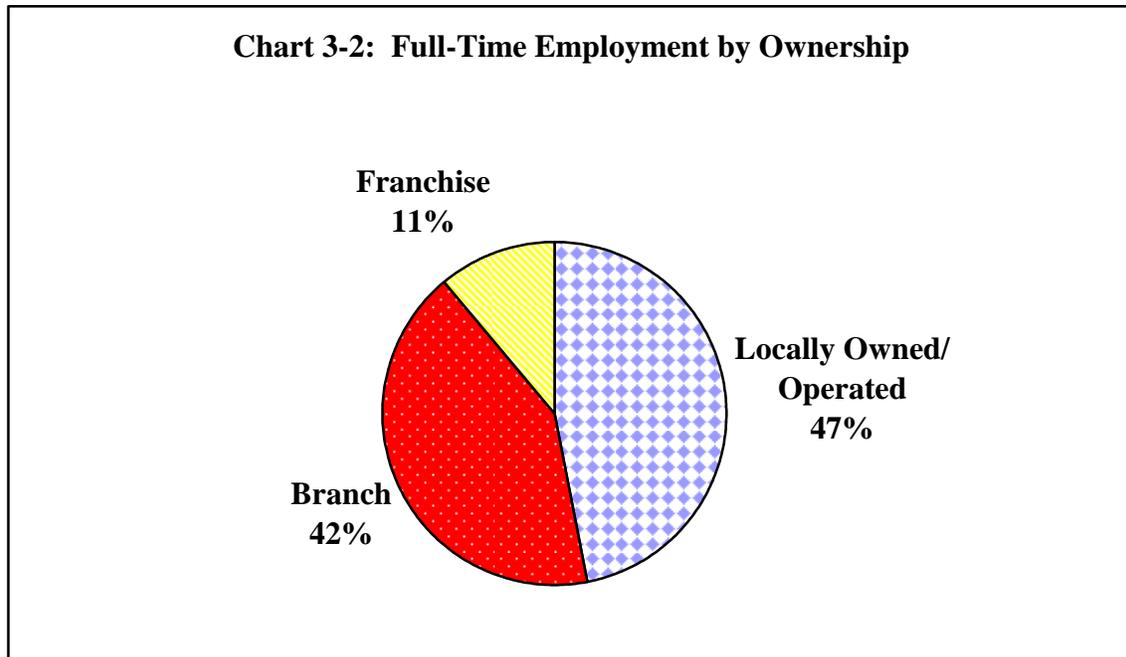
trimmed average) of 9.7 full-time employees, up from 8.0 three years ago. (The trimmed mean discards the single highest and lowest values. This helps prevent a firm with an exceptionally – and atypically – high or low number of employees from skewing the data.) The trimmed average number of part-time employees is actually down to 4.7 per firm currently from 6.1 per firm three years ago. Seasonal employment on average is up from three years ago. Businesses indicated that those seasonal workers are employed during busy times of spring and fall. See Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2: Number of Employees of Surveyed Businesses**

	Total Full-Time and Part-Time Employees	Trimmed Average Number of Employees Per Firm*			
		Full time	Part time	Seasonal	Temporary
Currently	1,634	9.7	4.7	3.9	3.5
Three Years Ago	1,449	8.0	6.1	2.1	3.5

\*Trimmed average – excludes highest and lowest values.

Of the 1,091 full-time employees in Yellow Medicine County, 42 percent are employed in businesses that indicated they are a branch location of a regional, national, or international company. Further, 27 percent of part-time workers are employed by these branch locations. In comparison, 47 percent of full-time workers and 52 percent of part-time workers are with a firm that has a local base. The remainder of the workers are with a franchise firm. These breakdowns are shown in Chart 3-2.



Employment data can also be analyzed by the business' industry category. The majority of full-time employees (362 employees) are in manufacturing, followed by other services, which includes services like garbage collection, hairstylists, and healthcare providers, (239), other (210), and agricultural production (160). The majority of part-time

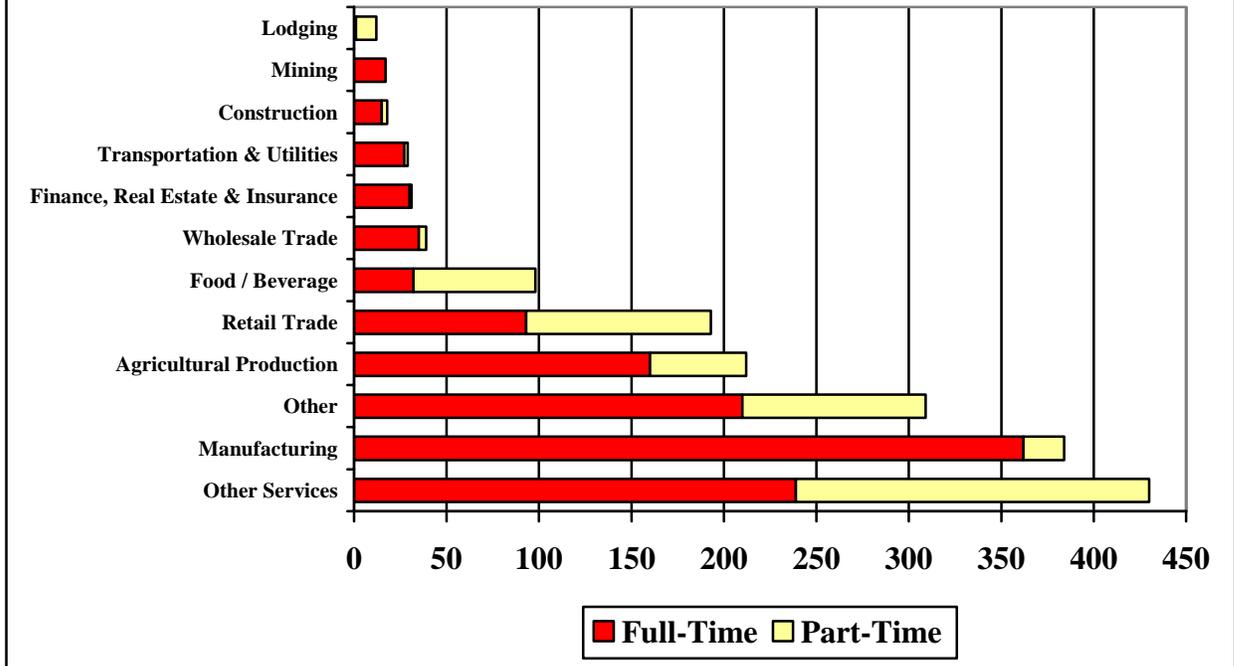
employees (191) are in the other services category, followed by retail trade (100), other (99), and food and beverage (66). Employment by industry for both full-time and part-time employment is shown in Table 3-3. Businesses could classify themselves as being in more than one industry, so employment by industry may not sum to total employment.

**Table 3-3: Employment by Industry for Surveyed Businesses**

Industry	Full-Time Employees	Part-Time Employees
Manufacturing	362	22
Other Services	239	191
Other	210	99
Agricultural Production	160	52
Retail Trade	93	100
Wholesale Trade	35	4
Food and Beverage	32	66
Finance, Real Estate and Insurance	30	1
Transportation and Utilities	27	2
Mining	17	0
Construction	15	3
Lodging	1	11

Four hundred and thirty individuals are employed either full-time or part-time in the other services industry. This makes the other services industry the largest employment industry in Yellow Medicine County. Manufacturing is the second largest industry with 384 full-time and part-time workers. These results are shown in Chart 3-3.

**Chart 3-3: Employment by Industry for Surveyed Businesses**



The average starting wage for all the businesses ranges from \$7.50 an hour for youth employees to \$25 an hour for professional and management employees. For unskilled workers, the average starting wage is \$9.10 an hour. These rates translate into weekly starting wages for full-time employees of \$360 for unskilled workers to \$1,000 for professional and management employees.

**Table 3-4: Average and Median Hourly Starting Wages Paid by Local Businesses<sup>2</sup>**

Classification	Average	Median
Professional/Management	\$25.01	\$23.46
Information Technology	\$18.62	\$19.25
Engineers	\$16.35	\$16.35
Other	\$15.53	\$11.25
Sales	\$14.58	\$13.00
Precision Production/Specialty Skills	\$13.56	\$13.00
Clerical/Secretarial	\$10.79	\$10.00
Temporary/Contract Employees	\$9.91	\$8.50
Unskilled Labor	\$9.10	\$7.75
Youth Employees	\$7.50	\$7.50

Businesses in Yellow Medicine County are expecting change. Only 42 percent of businesses are not expecting to expand, move, sell, close, downsize, or merge in the

<sup>2</sup> Median is the value in an ordered set of values below and above which there is an equal number of values. Average is the result of dividing the sum of a set of figures by the number of figures.

future. Twenty-eight percent of businesses plan to expand at their current location and 14 percent plan to expand at another location. Thirteen percent of businesses are planning on selling. Three percent of businesses did indicate the possibility of closing in the future. Firms could indicate more than one choice in answering the question. Results are shown in Table 3-5.

**Table 3-5: Are You Currently Considering?**

Option	Percent of Businesses
Not Considering Any of These Changes	42%
Expanding – At This Location	28%
Expanding – Adding Another Location	14%
Selling	13%
Merging with or Acquiring Another Business	7%
Other Changes to Business Plan	6%
Closing	3%
Moving	1%
Downsizing	1%

### **Overview of Business Retention and Expansion Strategies**

Profits are the key to the retention and expansion of businesses. While the owners of a business might be attracted to an area because it is a nice place to live or raise a family, a business can only survive if it makes a profit. The same is the case for businesses that start in a community. The owners may be loyal to the community, but if they cannot turn a profit, they will need to move or close the business; they do not have a choice.

In a market economy, making a profit is the responsibility of the business’ management and its employees, not the government or community groups. However, the actions of these organizations can sometimes help businesses become more profitable. This report includes four strategies and many projects aimed at helping businesses become more profitable and thus more able to survive and grow in the community.

The potential projects included in this section of the report are intended to be ideas the community can consider during its Task Force Retreat. They were developed at the research review panel meeting held at the University of Minnesota and by the author and reflect the results of the local survey.

None of the projects included in this report will address all of the businesses’ concerns or serve as the key to prosperity for all businesses and the community. However, they are all feasible options that can help strengthen the business sector and the local economy.

Implementation of the projects the Task Force agrees upon will require collaboration among various sectors in the county – no one group can do all of the work itself. This collaboration is a benefit in itself to local businesses since it provides a forum for addressing important issues, efficiently links businesses to policy makers, helps minimize

the duplication of services, and helps inform a cross-section of the community about economic and business issues.

### **Business Retention and Expansion Strategies for Yellow Medicine County**

1. Improve Business Profitability by Helping Businesses to Understand and Capitalize on Economic Trends.
2. Improve Labor Force Availability and Productivity through Training.
3. Improve Labor Force Availability and Productivity through Recruitment.
4. Improve and Promote the Quality of Life in Yellow Medicine County.

### **Process for Setting Priorities**

For each of the above strategies, we will use the following process at the Task Force Retreat on Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008:

1. Survey results from the BR&E business visits will be reviewed;
2. Task Force will review the suggested projects for responding to the businesses' concerns;
3. Task Force members will nominate projects they feel fit the local area the best (including new suggestions or modifications of the suggestions in this report);
4. After final discussion, each Task Force member will vote for three projects.

## **BR&E Strategy One: Improve Business Profitability by Helping Businesses to Understand and Capitalize on Economic Trends**

### **Overview of the Strategy**

As mentioned earlier, business profits are the key to the retention and expansion of businesses. While current profitability is important, businesses must also make strategic, coordinated, and proactive plans to remain profitable. In order to formulate plans, businesses must have a strong sense of the future of the local economy and their own industry.

There is no proven method for predicting the future of an economy. Economists have developed models which can assist in making future decisions. These models are typically based on historical trends that make projections into the future. While this report does not provide a highly technical economic model for Yellow Medicine County, it does highlight some of the trends that are affecting and will continue to affect Yellow Medicine County. In identifying these trends, community leaders will be able to take a more comprehensive and proactive approach to planning for the future of the county. In planning for the future, community leaders can help businesses to identify, understand, and capitalize on major economic trends.

There are a number of trends that are converging to change the economy of Yellow Medicine County. These trends were identified by a review of the business visit surveys and by the author. In all likelihood, these trends will not be a surprise to community leaders or to local businesses. The importance of this strategy is to begin to think of these trends as a whole and to formulate a comprehensive and proactive approach to leading the county and its businesses through these changes in a manner that takes advantage of the opportunities these trends provide. The trends, identified by many economists, are: an increasingly global economy, the changing demographics of rural America, and technological change and advancement.

### **Survey Results Related to the Strategy:**

One of the most striking results from the survey responses was a lack of an awareness of trends that will affect the future of businesses in Yellow Medicine County. These results were woven throughout the survey. Following are a few observations from the study that support this theory. Over one-quarter (29 percent) of businesses are unsure if there are any major technological innovations on the horizon in their industry that will affect their company. Eleven percent of businesses that are not currently exporting cite “never considered it before” as a key reason. Another 11 percent of businesses do not have internet access. Eighteen percent of businesses are considering downsizing, selling, moving, or closing. Of those, six percent are making the change because of retirement. If not addressed, these trends could have a negative impact on the future of Yellow Medicine County. The next section of this report will address each of these factors in more detail.

### Increasingly Global Economy:

Fourteen percent of local businesses are currently exporting internationally. The majority (70 percent) of these exporting businesses are manufacturers. However, these exports only account for 2 percent of total gross sales. Over 64 percent of Yellow Medicine County's gross sales (on a non-weighted basis) are made within 25 miles of the business' location. The most common destination for exports is Canada, as eleven percent of exporting businesses report this as the country of destination. South America, China, and Australia are also popular markets.

Chart 3-4 shows the surveyed businesses' current export status. Ten businesses are currently exporting. Four businesses are planning to start exporting. The majority of businesses, 50, are not exporting at this time and have no immediate plans to begin exporting.



For businesses that do not currently export, the major reason for not exporting is that the business is designed to serve a specific area. Other top reasons for not exporting are shown in Table 3-6. Many of the reasons that businesses gave for not exporting (such as concerns about receiving payment and a lack of knowledge) can be addressed and resolved with assistance that is available. Businesses could select more than one reason that prevents them from exporting.

**Table 3-6: What Prevents You From Exporting Your Product?**

Reason	Number of Businesses	Percent of Businesses
Business Designed to Serve Specific Area	22	31%
Business is Too Small	14	19%
Other Reason	12	17%
Never Considered It Before	8	11%
Concerns About Receiving Payment	4	6%
Language Barrier	3	4%
Costs/Risks Too High	3	4%
Lack of Knowledge of Foreign Countries/Markets	2	3%
Lack of Specific Export Knowledge	2	3%
Tough Competition	2	3%
Restrictive State/Federal Regulations	0	0%

Businesses that are currently exporting are also facing some difficulties. Three percent feel they have an inadequate knowledge of foreign countries and markets and another three percent are having trouble with transportation of the product.

#### Demographic Shifts:

As noted in Chapter 2, the demographics of western Minnesota are changing. The total population in the region has been declining for decades. Those who remain in the area are growing older. These changes have significant implications for businesses in Yellow Medicine County. In addition to concerns about the potential labor force, local businesses are also facing concerns about the future of their business.

Eighteen percent of businesses visited indicated that they are considering downsizing, selling, moving, or closing as shown in Table 3-5. Thirteen percent of these businesses plan to sell at some point in the near future.

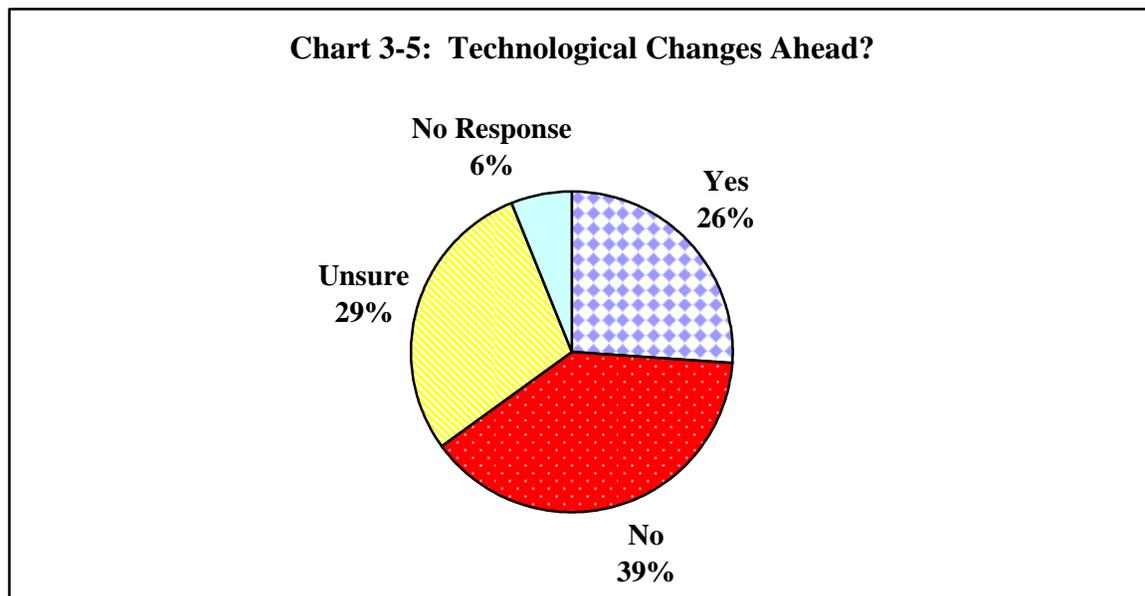
When asked why they are considering downsizing, selling, moving, or closing, the plurality indicated it was because of retirement (6 percent). Other reasons cited include: trying to sell business but unsuccessful (4 percent), changing market conditions (3 percent), rigid code enforcement (3 percent), an insufficient labor supply (3 percent), and other business opportunities (3 percent).

If firm owners in Yellow Medicine County do not have a market to sell their business, they will have to close. If the sale of the business was to fund retirement for the owner, this could have additional consequences for the county's economy beyond just the loss of a business. As the population ages, it seems likely more and more business owners will be facing this decision. If willing and able buyers exist in the market, then Yellow Medicine County may be able to keep those businesses.

## Technological Change:

Technological change is a buzz word that comes with a variety of definitions. Technological change can be industry specific, for example, advances in Global Positioning Systems (GPS) for the application of fertilizers on farm fields. It can also be very generic, encompassing advances in internet and cell phone technology. Technological change can change the face of industry in two ways. First, it can change the way current businesses operate. Second, it can be responsible for the creation of entirely new business opportunities born to produce and market new technology.

Businesses in Yellow Medicine County report industry-specific change as affecting their business. Seven percent of businesses indicated that technological change was one of the primary drivers of change in their employment level over the past three years. In addition, twenty-six percent of businesses indicate technological change will affect their company in the future. In an open-ended question, businesses could list changes they see coming. A sampling of these responses include: electric cars, solar generators, wind energy, computerized diesel engines, applications of fertilizers via GPS, seed genetics, electronic/paperless technology, digital technology, and internet sales.

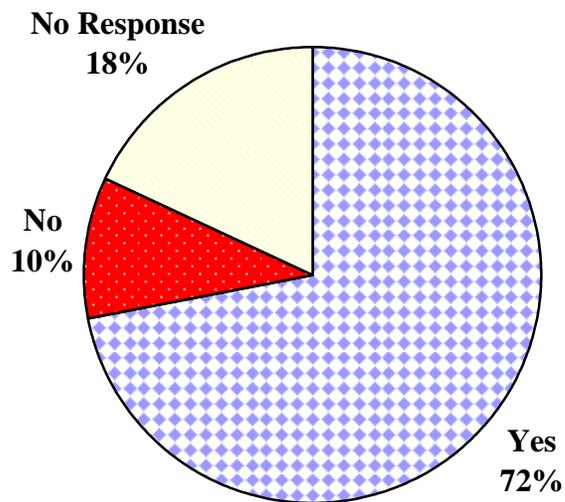


While each industry may face its own set of technological changes, certain technology-related changes are being incorporated into the daily lives of most people, including the internet and cell phones. However, businesses in Yellow Medicine County face challenges in this area. A lack of high speed internet is one challenge. Eleven percent of businesses indicated they do not have internet and six percent are still using a dial-up connection. Table 3-7 lists the types of internet currently in use by businesses. Satisfactory internet service is another challenge for business, as shown in Chart 3-6. Finally, local businesses have difficulties with cell phone reception, as nearly forty percent of businesses reported this as an issue for the firm. See Chart 3-7.

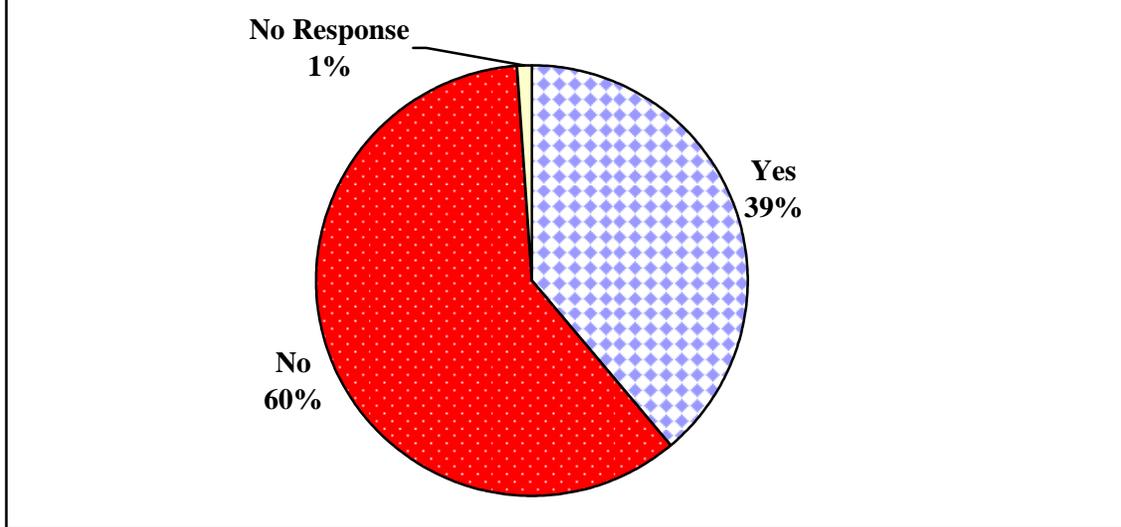
**Table 3-7: Which Type of Internet Service Does Your Business Use?**

Type of Service	Percent of Businesses
DSL Telephone	54%
Wi-Fi	13%
None	11%
T-1 Lines	10%
Satellite	7%
Cable	7%
Dial-Up	6%
Fiber	1%
Powerline	1%
WiMax	1%
Do Not Know	0%

**Chart 3-6: Are You Satisfied with your Current Internet Service?**



**Chart 3-7: Is Cell Phone Reception an Issue for You?**



Technological change can also bring opportunities for local businesses to grow and expand by creating a new product. An example of this would be alternative energy. Businesses in the region may already be engaged in this industry. As new sources of alternative energy become available, there may be opportunities for these businesses to create new products.

Potential Projects for Local Consideration:

The following projects are designed to help businesses and the community begin to focus on economic trends that will affect the business climate in Yellow Medicine County. These potential projects provide suggestions on how the Task Force can assist businesses in understanding and capitalizing on these trends. The Yellow Medicine County BR&E Task Force may choose among these options during its planning retreat or it may design some of its own potential projects.

**1. Improve cell phone and internet service.**

Task Force members could form a coalition to work with local internet and cell phone service providers to improve the level and functionality of service provided. If the community is united on this issue, it may be easier to get the attention of service providers. The committee could make their case to cell phone and internet providers by attempting to identify areas where cell phone coverage and high-speed internet is lacking. One way to do this is to contact businesses that reported cell phone coverage and internet service as a problem. The committee could map out areas that the businesses report as the most problematic. The committee could then identify a locally elected official from the local government in the problem area to commit to work with cell phone and internet providers to resolve the problems.

## **2. Enhance and expand internet usage and availability.**

In an increasingly global economy, the internet is becoming a key to success for small businesses and small towns. Businesses in Yellow Medicine County have the potential to increase productivity and therefore increase profitability by utilizing the internet to its highest capacity – especially for marketing and selling their products. There are two steps the Task Force can take to assist businesses in using the internet to its highest capacity. First, the Task Force can work to increase the availability of the internet. Second, the Task Force can assist local businesses in becoming more internet savvy.

Businesses that responded to the survey indicate that internet availability in the county is a concern. Currently, six percent of businesses that use the internet are relying on dial-up. Ten percent of businesses are not satisfied with their current internet service. Eleven percent of businesses report having no internet.

The Task Force could recommend to local governments that they consider setting up city-wide wireless networks. Several cities and towns in Minnesota, including Chaska, Osseo, and Minneapolis, have established or are working on establishing city-wide wireless networks. These networks allow anyone to access the internet from their own home and/or business via the city network.

Helping the community become more familiar with the internet and its applications will assist in expanding internet use. Task Force members can engage University of Minnesota Extension to conduct its Access E.info program ([www.accesse.info](http://www.accesse.info)). The program provides online resources and hands-on workshops that help small businesses, local governments, nonprofits, and individual users discover how to use the internet to its greatest capacity.

Task Force members can choose the workshop or workshops that they want to be provided in the community. Task Force members would be responsible for choosing a workshop, finding a sponsor for the workshop, arranging for a computer lab, and for recruiting the businesses to participate. In addition to Task Force members, individuals who might work on this project include Extension Educators Tobias Spanier and Neil Linscheid, both in the Marshall Regional Office.

## **3. Host a “Yellow Medicine County Business Succession” workshop.**

Thirteen percent of businesses are considering selling and three percent closing. This is a critical period for those businesses. If an interested and qualified buyer can be identified, it increases the likelihood that these businesses will remain in the county.

Task Force members and other community leaders, especially those involved in education, such as community education, could come together to host a day-long event on the future of Yellow Medicine County businesses. The focus of the event would be to address succession issues for businesses in the county. Both current firm owners and potential future successors should be targeted.

Topics for current owners could include: writing a strategic business plan, creating a personal financial plan, crafting an estate plan, identifying a successor, transitioning to new ownership, and mentoring the successor.

Topics for potential future successors could include: writing a strategic business plan, business financing, ownership structure, transitioning to ownership, and management of businesses. Mentoring/coaching opportunities for aspiring and new business owners could be introduced at this event as well.

Speakers could come from across the educational and business spectrum. The Small Business Development Centers, SCORE, local attorneys, accountants, bankers, and local residents with success stories could all be potential sources of speakers. This workshop could also be coupled with other topics, such as taxation issues and employee benefits information. This could help to increase turnout.

This project would require the guidance of a few Task Force members. Task Force members would be responsible for recruiting participants, securing a meeting location, arranging the guest speakers, and perhaps arranging for a meal to be served.

#### **4. Create a “*Yellow Medicine County Exports*” workshop.**

Businesses in Yellow Medicine County report some hesitancy to exporting. Their concerns are those that are experienced by many businesses that are new to the export market including: concerns about receiving payments, language barriers, and a lack of knowledge. These types of problems can be resolved. Once businesses have these concerns addressed, they may feel more confident about entering the export market.

The Task Force could develop a workshop that is aimed at addressing and resolving some of these export anxieties. This workshop could serve as an educational tool for local businesses. A group of community leaders (including Task Force, Chamber of Commerce and EDA members) could work with local and state programs to create this workshop. One excellent state resource is the Department of Employment and Economic Development’s Minnesota Trade Office. An initial workshop could focus on the benefits of exporting. With help from the Trade Office, an entire series could be developed that will eventually address the specific issues that are currently restricting exporting.

Task Force members can contact Ed Dieter, the Deputy Director of Education and Trade Assistance, at the Minnesota Trade Office for more information. He can be reached at (651) 259-7485 or [ed.dieter@state.mn.us](mailto:ed.dieter@state.mn.us). They can also visit [www.exploreminnesota.com/calendar](http://www.exploreminnesota.com/calendar) to view training opportunities that already exist for companies interested in exporting.

## **5. Create an International Business Roundtable.**

The goal of the roundtable would be to bring businesses that are currently exporting into communication with businesses that are considering exporting. The goal of the roundtable would be for experienced businesses to share with other local businesses their experiences. This would also increase awareness of the products being created in the area and encourage cooperation among local businesses.

The Task Force could invite Yellow Medicine County businesses to meet on a regular basis. This could be a brown-bag lunch meeting, or a more formal affair. The Task Force could designate someone to offer a moderate level of facilitation of the roundtable discussion, but let the focus remain on business owners' communication with each other. They could also assign someone to take notes and email them to participants after each meeting to keep a record of issues that are discussed.

Roundtables could also feature a guest speaker, such as a representative of the Minnesota Trade Office, knowledgeable in foreign trade. The Minnesota Trade Office employs International Trade Representatives who specialize in specific regions of the globe. They also have representatives that specialize in two industries: the environmental and energy industry and the medical and healthcare industry. The Minnesota Trade Office also provides webinars on international trade. The Roundtable could gather businesses together in a central location to participate in the webinar and then have some discussion following the presentation.

Task Force members may wish to contact businesses that are currently exporting and find out topics and speakers that would most directly apply to those businesses. Topics and speakers of most relevance to current exporters may help to bring those businesses to the roundtable. They are essential to the success of this potential project, so they need to be present.

This project would require a few Task Force members to send out invitations and secure meeting space, the business owners who participate, and any guest speakers. The International Business Roundtable could consider meeting at the library, a local school, or community center.

## **6. Conduct a semi-annual “*Technology Matters*” survey.**

Task Force members could consider identifying one economic development professional in the region to conduct an semi-annual survey of local business regarding future technological change. The survey could be sent via email to local businesses. The survey would be brief and include only two questions. The first question would ask “What industry-specific technological changes do you see affecting your business in the next year?”. The second question would ask “What global changes in technology and engineering do you see as having potential for your firm?”.

The survey results would be analyzed by the economic development professional in charge of conducting the survey. If trends and similarities in answers begin to appear, the Task Force can work to address those needs. For example, if several business owners indicate an interest in wind energy as a possible new product area for the business, then the county can begin to investigate opportunities to bring businesses together to work on wind energy.

This project would primarily involve the local economic development professional selected to implement it. The person would be responsible for collecting as many email addresses as possible and maintaining an email discussion list. Several Task Force members should be identified to assist in collecting emails and to follow-up on responses from the survey. The survey could be conducted via one of the many on-line survey tools, such as Survey Monkey or Zoomerang or SurveyGold. This would allow the businesses' responses to remain confidential.

**7. Facilitate coordination between technical colleges and businesses to bring new technologies to businesses.**

In addition to providing employees already trained in industry-specific technologies, technical colleges can provide training and assistance for current businesses looking to adopt new technologies. Only thirty-eight percent of businesses indicated that they have used the Granite Falls or Canby community and technical college for continuing education, workshops, seminars, or customized training.

The Task Force could work to bring local businesses together with technical colleges to ensure that local businesses are aware of services offered by the colleges and of any areas of specialty the colleges may have. This could be as simple as mailing brochures from the technical colleges to each business. It could be more engrossing by having Task Force members contact each business in person or on the phone and identify training needs. Then the Task Force members could identify which local college would be best suited to respond to this need. The Task Force may wish to consider Customized Training in the Minnesota State Colleges and University system as a potential partner in this project.

**8. Promote a “Think Globally” campaign.**

Task Force members could work with the chamber, county, EDA and other local groups to launch a campaign to think globally. The campaign would focus on getting all of Yellow Medicine County to think outside of the region and outside of the norm. The campaign would be aimed at all ages in the community. Activities could be designed that promote Yellow Medicine County as a place that is globally connected.

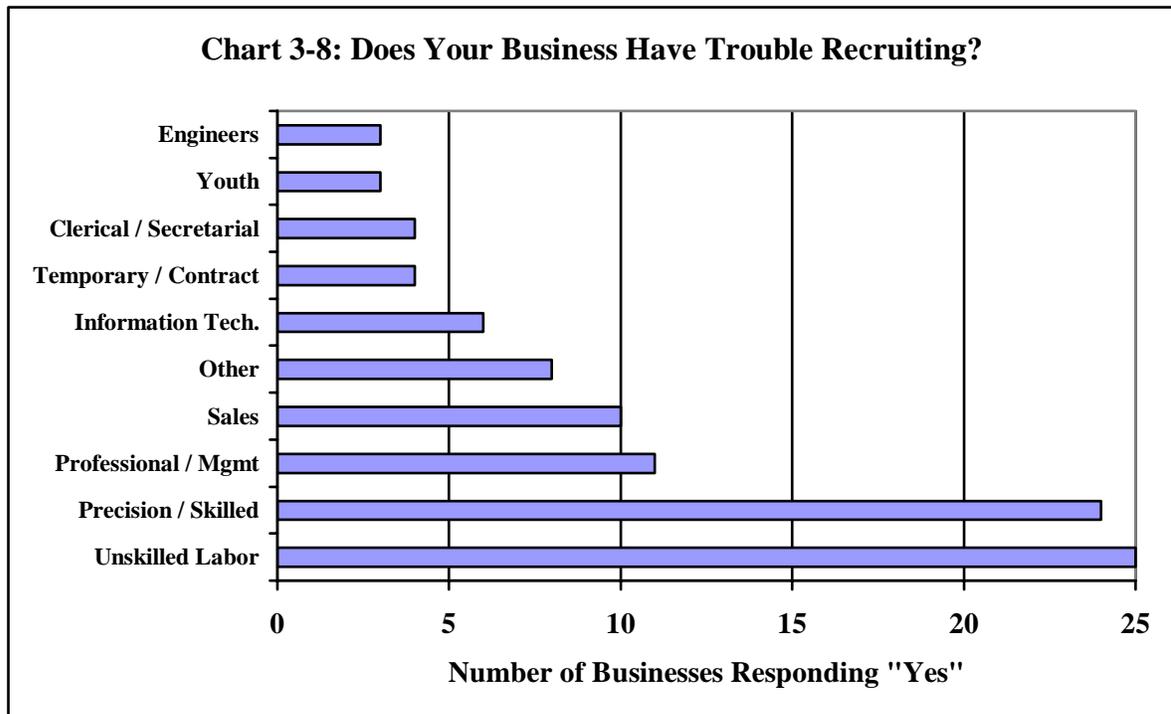
The group might consider creating a speakers series addressing global issues, hosting new events with an international flair to them, and/or establishing a calendar of international events.

This potential project could also tie in with other potential projects, such as the international business roundtable, and other strategies, such as improving the quality of life in Yellow Medicine County.

## BR&E Strategy Two: Improve Labor Force Availability and Productivity through Training

### Overview of the Strategy

The tightening labor market caused by a shrinking labor force in Yellow Medicine County (see Chapter 2) and an increase in the number of job openings is being felt by local businesses. Surveyed businesses report that they are having problems recruiting labor. When asked to list three community-related factors that were the greatest weakness for their business, the most popular answer was availability of skilled labor. Nearly one-quarter of businesses indicated they had problems recruiting precision production and specialty skills employees. Another 11 percent had trouble with professional/management employees and 10 percent with sales employees, as illustrated in Chart 3-8.



#### Survey Results Related to the Strategy:

Responses from local businesses indicate that problems finding skilled labor may be increasing. Fifteen percent of businesses plan on increasing the number of precision production and specialty skills employees in the next three years as shown in Table 3-8. Businesses plan to add a total of 275 jobs in precision production and specialty skills occupations. Businesses are also anticipating a 13 percent increase in sales and 11 percent increase in professional/management employees. In total, businesses indicate they will increase employment by 333 jobs in the next three years, with 83 percent of the

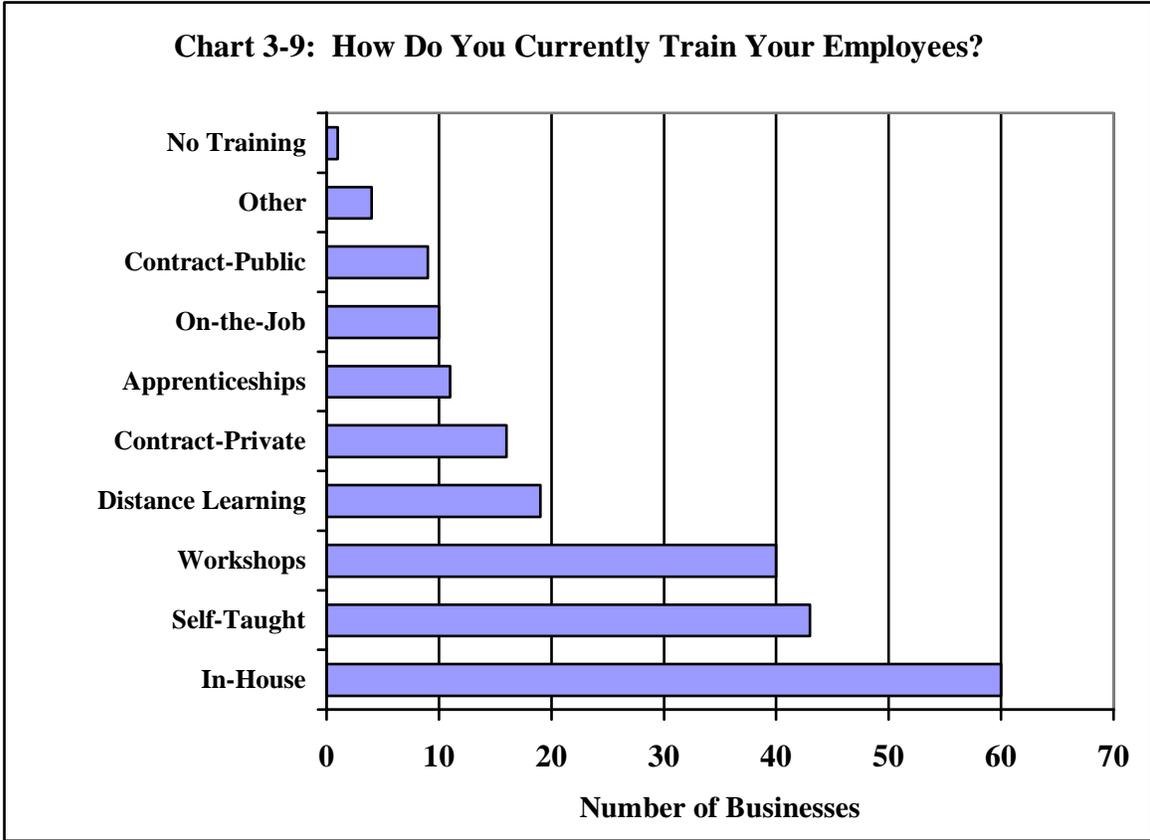
new jobs being precision production/ specialty skills jobs. This represents a 19 percent increase over current employment levels.

**Table 3-8: Change in Number of Employees in Next Three Years?**

Category	Increase	Stay Same	Decrease	Net Change
Precision Production/ Specialty Skills	15%	39%	0%	275
Unskilled Labor	11%	54%	1%	15
Professional/Management	11%	46%	0%	13
Sales	13%	42%	1%	11
Clerical/Secretarial	7%	42%	4%	9
Youth Employees	4%	36%	0%	7
Other	3%	18%	0%	5
Information Technology	6%	33%	0%	1
Temporary/Contract Employees	4%	33%	0%	1
Engineers	0%	38%	0%	0

These trends (the current difficulty in recruiting and a future need for skilled labor) are converging to leave Yellow Medicine County with a potential future worker shortage. In particular, there may be a structural mismatch as the skills and training of the labor force may not match the needs of local businesses. One way to help ease a worker shortage and to avoid structural mismatch is through training.

Currently, Yellow Medicine County businesses are using traditional methods of training for their employees. Eighty-three percent of businesses use in-house training, while 60 percent use self-taught training, and 56 percent send employees to workshops. Only 13 percent use a contract with a public vendor (such as technical colleges) to do on-site training and 15 percent use apprenticeships.



Businesses in Yellow Medicine County do have some experience in working with the local technical colleges. Minnesota West Community and Technical College has campuses in both Canby and Granite Falls. However, the majority of businesses (60 percent) have never used the schools for an employee-search. Just over half (53 percent) of Yellow Medicine County businesses report never having used those technical colleges for continuing education, workshops, seminars, or customized training.

Beyond finding skilled labor, businesses in the county report a need to train their current employees. Businesses were asked to select training topics which are needed but are not already being provided. The most popular business response was customer service (40 percent), followed by time/project management (32 percent), employee management (31 percent), and sales and marketing (24 percent). Businesses could also report the number of employees that need the training. In terms of number of employees needing the training, the topics in most demand are: customer service (172 people), diversity training (134), time/project management (100), and interpersonal communication (85).

**Potential Projects for Local Consideration:**

The following projects are designed to help businesses improve labor force availability and productivity through training. The Yellow Medicine County BR&E Task Force may consider these options during its planning retreat or it may design some of its own potential projects.

**9. Employ existing resources to ascertain what skills are needed by Yellow Medicine County workers.**

Key indicators are predicting that a workforce shortage could be possible in Yellow Medicine County. The labor force is declining and businesses are hiring. As the labor market tightens, it will be essential that worker skills match with employer demand. Several tools currently exist that can assist the community in its efforts to match employer demand with worker availability.

*Occupations in Demand* developed by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, is an example of a tool that Yellow Medicine County can employ to determine training needs. *Occupations in Demand* can be accessed on-line at: <http://www.deed.state.mn.us/lmi/tools/oid/>. *Occupations in Demand* provides a ranking of the most demanded jobs in the region. It also predicts the future growth in demand for the job and provides the education and training needs for each occupation.

Task Force members could use *Occupations in Demand* to determine the occupations that are growing in the region. They could use the tool to determine what the training needs are for the county. The Task Force could then conduct a statewide search of colleges or other programs that meet the identified needs. The Task Force would provide the results of this research to local businesses. Going a step farther, this project could involve partnering with these programs to proactively promote these programs to Yellow Medicine County students or workers for training, as well as to recruit students from these programs to jobs in Yellow Medicine County.

In addition to Task Force members, this project could involve Department of Employment and Economic Development Labor Analyst, Cameron Macht, college representatives, business owners, high school career counselors, secondary schools, and the Chamber of Commerce.

**10. Bring pre-apprenticeships to the community.**

The Task Force might consider collaborating with local businesses, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, and the Department of Labor to develop and sponsor pre-apprenticeship programs in the county. Pre-apprenticeships give interested and qualified workers the opportunity to decide on an occupational track, develop fundamental skills, and improve productivity. Pre-apprenticeship programs need to have an approved plan and are short-term, but very intensive programs. The training typically occurs in a school or a training center. Pre-apprenticeships can also serve as a funnel for students into a Registered Apprenticeship program. Pre-apprenticeships can also be a requirement of these programs.

Pre-apprenticeships can be customized and tailored to fit a wide range of occupations. Task Force members could work together with local businesses and the survey results to determine occupations that are in demand and require specialized training. Once these occupations are identified, the Task Force can work with the Department of Employment

and Economic Development and the Department of Labor to create a pre-apprenticeship plan. The Task Force will probably need to identify an organization, such as Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU), to conduct the program. Successful pre-apprenticeships have been developed in Minnesota. Anoka Technical College is providing a pre-apprenticeship program open to veterans that provides basic training for the truck driving industry. Saint Paul College runs a plumbing pre-apprenticeship that serves as a prerequisite for a Registered Apprenticeship.

Task Force members would be responsible for initiating this project. Once started, a representative from the Department of Employment and Economic Development and a representative from the Department of Labor would be essential to ensuring the success of this project. The following website contains detailed information about existing apprenticeship programs in the state: <http://www.doli.state.mn.us/appr.html>. Task Force members can also contact Bob Hoenie, Department of Employment and Economic Development, at (763) 785-6470 or Rich Davy, Department of Labor, at (651) 284-5199 for more information.

#### **11. Form a Workforce Development Committee to promote and develop training opportunities by partnering with higher education.**

The Task Force may choose to address the issue of improving the quality and quantity of training in the county by promoting the existing technical training resources in or near the county. The Workforce Development Committee could convene business leaders along with elected and other leaders in the community to learn about the technical education opportunities that are available to them now. The committee would communicate with business owners about their specific training needs, and would play the role of linking and connecting existing resources with existing problems. Any obvious gaps in technical education would be addressed as well. This would be a proactive initiative to solve short-term and systemic workforce problems.

A more extensive way to pursue this project would be to create new partnerships with higher education to identify funding and bring new training opportunities to Yellow Medicine County. The committee would work to establish lines of communication with whoever handles community outreach at each school. Training professionals could come to Yellow Medicine County to offer targeted trainings in the community.

In addition to Task Force members, other members of/or resources for this committee might include the following: local colleges (Minnesota West Community and Technical College in Canby and Granite Falls, Ridgewater College in Willmar, Southwest Minnesota State in Marshall, and the University of Minnesota – Morris), the Chamber of Commerce, the EDA, and human resources directors from businesses.

#### **12. Sponsor At Your Service Customer Training.**

Businesses that participated in the survey indicated an overwhelming need for training in customer service. Forty percent of businesses reported that they had employees that

needed customer service training. Businesses also indicated that 172 individual employees in the county need this training. Given this overwhelming demand, the Task Force could consider sponsoring At Your Service training from University of Minnesota Extension.

At Your Service training is provided at a variety of levels of community effort. The basic training is a ½ day event that is aimed at service providers in the community. After participation in the workshop, the sponsor retains the materials and can use the information to train further individuals. The community can go deeper into customer service training efforts and sponsor a community-initiative. The community-initiative program is a one year effort that brings the entire community together to improve customer service across the community.

Task Force members could coordinate a community-wide effort to bring this program to Yellow Medicine County. This would include organizing volunteers and arranging for the training events to take place. Support could come from local Extension personnel, such as Neil Linscheid, the Community Economics Extension Educator located in the Marshall Regional Office.

### **13. Assist local businesses in sharing business training courses.**

Businesses in Yellow Medicine County indicate a need for additional worker training. Some training needs are specific to a particular industry. However, some training needs are broad and apply to many businesses in the county. Task Force members could work to coordinate training opportunities that could be utilized by more than one firm in the county. Businesses could then share in this training. This would increase efficiency and decrease any costs associated with the training programs.

Task Force members could use the survey results to assist them in determining what types of training are in demand. Task Force members could then identify organizations that provide these types of training and arrange for the training to be provided in the community. Businesses would be responsible for arranging for their employees to attend the training and to cover any associated costs.

Since this project involves training, other members of the committee, in addition to Task Force members, could include: local colleges, University of Minnesota Extension, Department of Employment and Economic Development, and local business human resources managers.

### **14. Host a career day at local high schools to inform students of potential future opportunities in the county.**

Yellow Medicine County has been losing population which has been slowly decreasing the size of the workforce in the county. Retaining youth is one way to avoid a workforce shortage. If new graduates can be convinced to live and work in the county after graduation, the available workforce will increase. New graduates will not remain in a

community, however, if they perceive that the community is lacking in opportunities for them. Promoting the opportunities in the area is one potential way to encourage new graduates to remain in Yellow Medicine County.

Task Force members could consider hosting a career day at high schools in the county. Career day could have a variety of components. It might feature a keynote speaker that would focus on the benefits of working and living in a rural community, such as Yellow Medicine County. The career fair could also feature booths from local employers. Representatives at these booths could provide students with information on careers within their companies and on the types of training needed for these careers. Big Lake recently conducted a Career Day for high school students as a result of their BR&E program. The Task Force could contact Leslie Chmielewski, City Planner, for more details at (763) 263-2107 or [leslie@ci.big-lake.mn.us](mailto:leslie@ci.big-lake.mn.us).

As this potential project involves activities in the school, it would be helpful for local school district representatives to be on the organizing committee in addition to Task Force members.

#### **15. Enhance technology to become more telecommuting friendly.**

As technology continues to advance, the need to be in a physical “place” is declining. There are more opportunities for workers to live and work in a location that is far from the business’ physical location. Many workers are part of a family and have to make decisions that are beneficial to everyone in the family. Decisions on where to live and work are therefore often based not only on job availability for one member of the family, but also on job opportunities for other members of the family. If Yellow Medicine County can increase its telecommuting friendliness, it may be able to attract new workers who might have located elsewhere because of the demands of other family members’ jobs.

Task Force members could work together to create an atmosphere in Yellow Medicine County that is telecommuting friendly. This might include working on suggestions in other potential projects, like increasing internet functionality. It might also include conducting some basic research into the pros and cons of telecommuting policies and then taking steps to reduce the cons.

## **BR&E Strategy Three: Improve Labor Force Availability and Productivity through Enhanced Recruitment**

### **Overview of the Strategy**

The labor force in Yellow Medicine County has been declining in recent years as the population declines. While the labor force is decreasing, the demand for new workers is on the rise. This appears to be occurring despite the slowing economy as evidenced in Chapter 2. Surveyed businesses in the county indicate that they will be increasing employment in the next three years. In order to accomplish this, businesses will need to recruit new employees or leave the county for a place with a sufficient workforce.

#### Survey Results Related to the Strategy:

Currently, businesses report having difficulties in recruiting employees of all skill levels. One-quarter of businesses surveyed indicated they have trouble recruiting unskilled labor. Another one-quarter had trouble finding precision production and specialty skills employees. Businesses further had trouble with professional/management employees (11 percent) and sales employees (10 percent). Meanwhile, businesses indicate they will be hiring in those same occupations in the next three years.

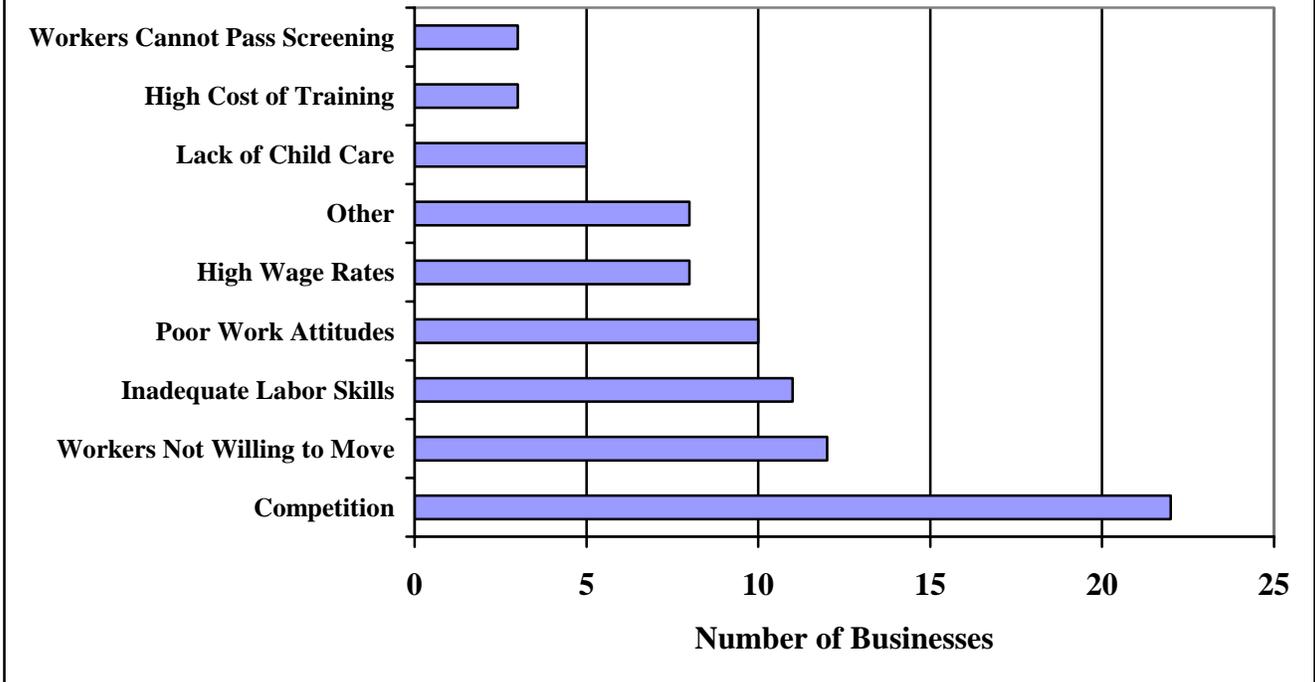
Businesses in the county use a variety of methods to locate new employees. The most popular method is word-of-mouth (57 percent of businesses). Other popular methods for finding new employees include referrals from existing employees (54 percent) and ads in local papers (50 percent). Only 13 percent of businesses reported using the internet as a way to identify potential employees. The current recruitment strategies used by businesses and the percent of businesses using them are listed in Table 3-9. Businesses could select more than one choice when answering this question.

**Table 3-9: Current Recruitment Strategies**

Strategy	Percent of Businesses
Word of Mouth	57%
Referrals from Existing Employees	54%
Ad in Local Community Papers	50%
Walk-In	38%
Promote From Within	33%
Placement Office of Four-year, Community and/or Technical Colleges	24%
Hire Own Apprentice	19%
Promote Temporary to Permanent	15%
Minnesota Workforce Centers	13%
Internet/World Wide Web	13%
Ad in Metro/State Paper	11%
Professional Associations	11%
Sign In Window	10%
Private Search Business	8%
Job Fair	7%
Other	6%
Temporary Agency/Staffing Service	4%
Union	0%

Businesses were also asked to provide insight into the reasons for their recruiting difficulties. Competition for employees was listed by 31 percent of businesses as a problem. Seventeen percent of businesses indicated the workers would not migrate into the area, 15 percent indicated workers had inadequate labor skills and 14 percent cited poor work attitudes. See Chart 3-10.

**Chart 3-10: Most Important Reasons for Recruiting Problems**



Businesses currently employ people who live close to work, with an astounding 79 percent of employees living within a 15 minute drive (one way). While this is a lifestyle advantage, limiting advertising to within the area reduces the pool of potential applicants.

While salary is a critical recruiting tool, benefits are also weighed into an employment decision. Businesses in Yellow Medicine County currently offer a wide range of benefits. The most frequently offered benefits include: paid vacation, paid holidays, health insurance, bonuses, retirement contributions, paid sick leave, life insurance, and disability insurance.

Improved recruitment strategies will help businesses to maintain profits. It can also help the county to retain businesses. Twenty-eight percent of businesses indicated the intent to expand in their current location. Fourteen percent of surveyed businesses are going to expand at another location. Of those businesses that intend to expand at another location, four percent of businesses have not decided where to expand. If labor is a problem in the county, these businesses may choose to expand outside the county. If the county can provide adequate labor, these businesses may choose to grow and expand in the community. This is an opportunity for Yellow Medicine County.

Potential Projects for Local Consideration:

The following projects are suggestions the Task Force can use to improve recruitment techniques in the county. The Task Force may choose to adopt one or more of these potential projects, modify one or more of these projects, or create entirely new projects.

**16. Create a Workforce Recruitment Committee to coordinate and expand recruitment activities.**

Currently, Yellow Medicine County businesses are using conventional methods to recruit employees to their businesses. As the labor market continues to tighten, businesses will need to enhance their recruitment efforts. Businesses can benefit by coordinating some of their recruitment efforts and by adding more recruitment tools to the toolbox. A Workforce Recruitment Committee could help provide businesses with the coordination of activities and the development and use of new recruitment techniques (for example, training businesses on how to post job openings on the internet).

Task Force members could form a Workforce Recruitment Committee. The Workforce Recruitment committee could convene business managers along with elected and other local leaders in the community to learn about recruitment efforts that other similar communities are currently using. The committee would communicate with business owners about their specific recruitment needs and would play the role of linking and connecting existing resources with existing concerns. This could include bringing in experts on workforce development and recruitment who might be able to demonstrate to businesses the most effective techniques for recruiting. This discussion should include conversations about recruiting in a larger area and recruiting using the internet.

The committee might pursue this project more extensively by helping local businesses to coordinate recruitment activities. All businesses in the region are going to need employees. There may be some recruitment activities that can be done together by businesses to reduce costs and increase efficiencies.

In addition to Task Force members, the committee might include representatives from local businesses, the placement offices at the college campuses in the county, and the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

**17. Promote Yellow Medicine County as a Place to Live and Work.**

As previously noted, the availability of labor is an issue to all businesses. In particular, technical, skilled, professional/management, and sales employees are difficult to recruit. The community might decide to establish a campaign promoting Yellow Medicine County as a nice place to live and work. The overwhelming majority of businesses rated the county as a good, very good, or excellent place to live and to work. They also cited the small town atmosphere as one of the best attributes of the county. Finally, they rated community services as good overall. There is a consistency and a theme here that could be used as the basis of promotion. Other possible angles to promote are sport and gaming

activities (such as hunting and fishing), the natural environment, and the historical features of the community.

The promotion effort should focus on people already familiar with the area. This might include former graduates of the local high schools. It might also include people who come regularly to the area to visit relatives or to hunt and fish.

In addition to Task Force participants, members of the committee might include chamber representatives, city leaders, and leaders from large employers.

### **18. Explore and promote incentives to retain students in the county.**

Recruitment efforts can be more successful if a large pool of trained workers is available. Once students graduate from high school, technical school, or college, it would be beneficial to local businesses if those students remained in the county. One potential method for retaining students is to provide incentives for them.

The Task Force could explore and develop different incentives that could be given to students that remain in the county to pursue their career. These incentives could be financial and might include for example, assistance in paying student loans. However, these incentives would not need to involve money. It could be the offer of further training after a few years of work, it could be discounts on local goods and services, it could be a section of honor at the local football games, or it could be an appreciation dinner every year. There are lots of possibilities. Task Force members could both brainstorm ideas and survey high school and college students about incentives they think would make them reconsider leaving. The Task Force could then work to implement a few of those ideas.

In addition to Task Force members, it would be helpful to have high school and college-aged students and those who serve them (such as teachers, the school district, and career counselors) work on this project.

### **19. Promote family friendly benefits.**

Workers do not make their employment decisions based only on their own wants and needs. Workers often have other family members to consider when selecting which firm and location to work in. Family friendly benefits are one way to increase the attractiveness of a job offer. Twenty-five percent of Yellow Medicine County businesses indicated that they do not offer health insurance, life insurance, paid sick leave, or pre-tax accounts for dependent care for their employees. By offering more of these benefits, businesses may notice an improvement in recruiting efforts.

The Task Force could work together to promote to local businesses the idea of providing family friendly benefits. One such way to promote this would be to prepare a fact-sheet. The fact-sheet could lay out the costs associated with each type of benefit and perhaps provide some additional information on how to get those benefits.

The Task Force could enhance this potential project by assisting businesses in purchasing insurance as a group which may help to lower costs for individual businesses. Organizations exist in Minnesota already that attempt to help individuals, communities, and small businesses pool their resources to provide health care insurance coverage. Yellow Medicine County is covered under the West Central Minnesota Healthcare Purchasing Alliance. The Task Force could investigate this alliance and determine if partnerships could be strengthened between businesses and the alliance.

**20. Strengthen the relationships between high schools, technical colleges, and local businesses.**

High schools and technical colleges function to provide basic training and education of workers in a community. High schools and colleges need to provide a certain level of education to all students. However, there are some opportunities for them to provide targeted training and education based on a demand from employers. If employers have the ability to communicate openly and in a timely manner to schools about their needs, then schools will have the option to respond to those needs. Further, businesses may be able to provide schools with some additional resources to promote those training opportunities. For example, if a business needs more trained mechanics, it could consider sponsoring a mechanics club at the local high school.

In order to strengthen these ties, Task Force members could form a committee that is composed of business owners/leaders, representatives from the local high schools, technical schools and colleges, and Chamber of Commerce representatives. This committee could work together to identify potential areas where the schools and businesses might coordinate activities. They could also promote the need for this coordination to local businesses and encourage their participation.

**21. Host a workshop for business owners on workers from different generations.**

Employees that are now entering the workforce have expectations that vary widely from those of their older colleagues. They also hunt for and apply for jobs using new technology and methods. In order to recruit and retain these workers, employers are going to have to adopt new techniques and tools.

The Task Force could help businesses in Yellow Medicine to identify and employ some of these new recruitment and retention techniques. The Task Force could organize a one-day workshop for business owners and human resource managers that would focus on the needs and technological skills of the younger generation. This workshop could feature information on social networking sites, online job sites, and the expectations of the newest generation regarding work.

Task Force members could ask local educators to assist in this project.

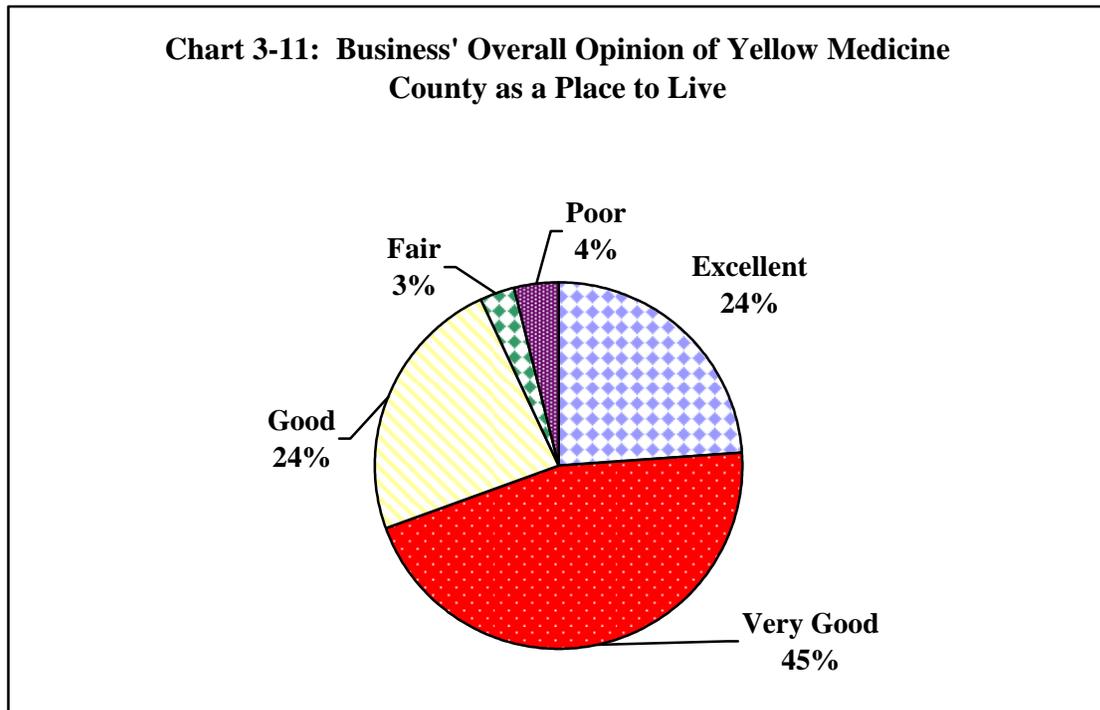
## BR&E Strategy Four: Improve and Promote the Quality of Life in Yellow Medicine County

### Overview of the Strategy

This strategy includes several diverse approaches related to improving and promoting the quality life through cultural and social activities in Yellow Medicine County. Business owners want to locate in areas with rich cultural and social opportunities and employees obviously prefer to work in such areas. Yellow Medicine County businesses already believe in the county’s small town atmosphere. This positive endorsement can be used to promote the community. The Task Force can further improve the image of the county by addressing the need for additional and improved cultural and social activities.

### Survey Results Related to the Strategy:

Overall, businesses in Yellow Medicine County have a positive impression of the county. Eighty-three percent of businesses rated the county as an “excellent” or “good” place to conduct business. Businesses were even more enthusiastic about Yellow Medicine County as a place to live. Ninety-four percent of businesses listed the community as an “excellent” or “good” place to live.



These positive feelings about the community also translate into positive impacts on the businesses. When asked about community features that have a positive, negative, or negligible impact on the business, businesses gave “small town atmosphere” the highest ranking. On a scale that ranks +2 as a very positive impact, 0 as no impact, and -2 as very negative impact, small town atmosphere received an average of 1.31. This means

businesses in the county see the small town atmosphere as having a strongly positive impact on their business. Hunting (1.00), festivals or events (0.79) the natural environment (0.75), and farm landscapes (0.71) were among other highly ranked community features.

On balance, businesses were also pleased with community services being provided. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being excellent, most community services averaged around a 3. Three is the numerical rating associated with “good”. The highest average scores went to emergency medical services (3.96), fire protection (3.94), religious choices (3.63), and health care facilities (3.55). Low scores were awarded to cultural opportunities (2.31), code enforcement (2.34), and zoning and permitting (2.54). Results for the all the community services ranked in the survey are found in Table 3-10.

It is common to observe among BR&E communities a low rating to zoning and permitting and high ratings to fire and law enforcement. Ratings that particularly stand out of this survey are the low marks for cultural opportunities and relatively low marks for recreational opportunities.

**Table 3-10: Community Services Rankings**

Excellent = 5	Very Good = 4	Good = 3	Fair = 2	Poor = 1
Service	Average Score			
Emergency Medical Services	3.96			
Fire Protection	3.94			
Religious Choices	3.63			
Health Care Facilities	3.55			
Higher Education (within reasonable drive)	3.53			
Public Elementary and Secondary Schools (K-12)	3.38			
Water	3.36			
Sewer	3.36			
Law Enforcement	3.34			
Public Library	3.28			
Snow Removal	3.27			
Solid Waste Disposal	3.24			
Financial Institutions	3.23			
Drainage	3.21			
Street Maintenance	3.17			
Housing Costs	3.17			
Community Education	3.06			
Housing Availability	2.99			
Recreational Opportunities	2.91			
Child Care	2.81			
Economic Development Authority	2.77			
Chamber of Commerce	2.71			
Zoning and Permitting	2.54			
Code Enforcement	2.34			
Cultural Opportunities	2.31			

Businesses also rated some community features as having a negative impact on their business (see Table 3-11). Those features include distance from large metro areas (-0.33), freeway access (-0.26), and lodging facilities (-0.06). Relatively low (but positive) scores were given to community diversity (0.23), activities for children and teens (0.30), and arts and cultural events (0.34).

**Table 3-11: Do the Following Community Features Have a Positive Impact, No Impact, or Negative Impact on Your Business? (+2 = Very Positive, 0=No Impact, -2 = Negative Impact)**

Community Feature	Business Rating
Small Town Atmosphere	1.31
Hunting	1.00
Other	0.83
Festivals or Events	0.79
Natural Environment	0.75
Farm Landscapes	0.71
Fishing	0.70
Seasonal Tourism	0.61
Historical Buildings	0.56
Museums/Historic Sites	0.51
Eating Establishments	0.42
Meeting Facilities	0.37
Arts and Cultural Events	0.34
Activities for Children and Teens	0.30
Community Diversity	0.23
Lodging Facilities	-0.06
Freeway Access	-0.26
Distance from Large Metro Areas	-0.33

Some of these community features cannot be changed physically. However, attitudes regarding the role they play in community and business development can be changed. Some of these community features can be improved. Following are some potential projects the Task Force can consider to improve the quality of life in Yellow Medicine County.

Potential Projects for Local Consideration:

The following projects are suggestions the Task Force can use to improve and promote the quality of life in Yellow Medicine County. The Task Force may choose to adopt one or more of these potential projects, modify one or more of these projects, or create entirely new projects.

**22. Promote and encourage youth engagement in Yellow Medicine County.**

Today’s youth are tomorrow’s future is an oft cited phrase. This old adage is especially imperative for Yellow Medicine County. As the population continues to age, county businesses will need to rely on today’s young people to become the new workforce. If individuals become engaged in the community at a young age, they are more likely to remain in the community and become the leaders of tomorrow. Further, if youth find value, entertainment, and satisfaction in the community, they are more likely to remain in the community.

The Task Force should consider promoting and encouraging activities that engage youth in the county. A potential activity could be to form a Youth Leadership Academy. The Academy is designed to create a forum for youth to gather and to explore issues of importance to them. The Academy could be a year-long experience for high school juniors and/or seniors. The Academy would host quarterly events with the youth. A speaker could be brought in to discuss issues that the group identifies.

The University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development may be able to assist in the development of the Youth Leadership Academy. There are several individuals within Extension that could be of assistance to the county. The Task Force could start by contacting Judith Conway, a 4-H Regional Educator, located in the Marshall Regional Office, or Eric Vogel, a Youth Work Institute Educator, located in the St. Cloud Regional Office. Sibley County conducted a successful county-wide Youth Leadership Academy in the past as a result of their BR&E program. The Task Force can contact Tim Dolan at (507) 237-4103 or [dolan008@umn.edu](mailto:dolan008@umn.edu) for more information.

### **23. Promote the role of the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Authority in improving the quality of life in Yellow Medicine County.**

Surprisingly, both the Chamber of Commerce and the local Economic Development Authority (EDA) received relatively low marks from the visited businesses. Businesses rated the Chamber of Commerce at an average of 2.71 which equates to just below good (3.0) and above fair (2.0). The EDA received a similar rating of 2.77. Thus businesses do not have a glowing view of the two organizations. Remarkably, however, businesses that had direct interaction with the Chamber and/or the EDA that involved technical assistance all indicated they would recommend the organization to other businesses. This suggests that there exists a misperception of the EDA and the Chamber.

The Task Force could work together with the EDA and the Chamber to promote the programs and activities that the organizations offer. In an open-ended question, one business owner, when asked what the Task Force/Economic Developer could do to assist them, remarked “keep us informed of their efforts and work with us to promote those efforts and to spread the word about what is possible.” There are a variety of methods that the Task Force could use to promote the efforts of the EDA and the Chamber. It could be a simple brochure that gets mailed to each business highlighting the programs of each organization. It could be more elaborate, with the organizations hosting “Get to Know Your EDA and Chamber of Commerce” events.

In addition to Task Force members, the local EDA and Chambers of Commerce should be involved in this project. It may also be useful to include city council members and county commissioners.

**24. Partner with regional higher education to bring performances to the community.**

Many institutions of higher learning have arts programs. These can include performance arts as well as visual arts. Task Force members could consider collaborating with some of the local higher education institutions to bring some of their performances and exhibits to Yellow Medicine County.

Several Task Force members would need to be identified to carry out this strategy. Task Force members could brainstorm a list of nearby institutions that might be willing to participate. Each Task Force member could take an institution or two and be responsible for contacting that place and initiating a conversation about the opportunities that might be available. School district officials may be responsible for helping to find a space for the event. In addition, Task Force members could request that the Southwest Minnesota Arts and Humanities Council partner on this project. Task Force members can learn more about the Council by visiting their website at <http://www.smahc.org/> or calling them at (800) 622-5284.

**25. Recruit a hotel to the area.**

Survey results indicate a need for lodging in Yellow Medicine County. When asked which community features had a positive or negative impact on business operations, businesses on average rated lodging as a -0.06 on a scale that values +2 as a very positive impact and -2 as a very negative impact. This means that businesses in the county feel lodging has a slightly negative impact on their business.

Task Force members could work together to recruit a hotel to the area. The first step would be to prepare a short market assessment/report on the need for a hotel in the region. This report could use any available data on the number of visitors to the area and any measures of hotel demand. Task Force members can then work to identify any hotel chains and/or local entrepreneurs who might be interested in establishing a new hotel in the county.

Task Force members will be critical to the success of this potential project. In addition, it will be necessary to have economic development professionals, county and city officials, and local business owners involved in the project.

**26. Establish a Cultural Center to promote the culture, history, ethnicity, and geography of Yellow Medicine County.**

Yellow Medicine County is rich in culture and history. Task Force members could consider coordinating efforts to establish a Cultural Center. The Cultural Center would promote the culture, history, ethnicity, and geography of the county through displays, performances, programs, tours, and brochures. The Cultural Center would not necessarily need to have a specific building, but it could be an organization that works together to promote all of Yellow Medicine County's attributes.

Specifically, Task Force members could cooperate with organizations in the county that are already promoting the culture and history of Yellow Medicine County. With the help of these organizations, Task Force members could work to broaden the impact of the individual organizations. Further, the Task Force could encourage these organizations to work together to provide more cultural opportunities in the county, since there is a perception that these opportunities are lacking. The Task Force could enrich this project by developing an overarching theme for the year and then inviting local organizations to sponsor events during the year related to the theme. Events could be sponsored by the local historical society, the library, the school district, and the Upper Sioux Community. In 2008, Minnesota celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. Organizations across the state hosted events to celebrate this occasion. Yellow Medicine County could use a similar model.

This project could be enhanced by developing a *cultural meander*. This would be similar to a self-directed tour and could be advertised and explained in a brochure. An example of a current self-directed tour would be the Pipestone National Monument. The cultural meander could identify several places of cultural and historical significance in the county and then encourage people to drive and/or walk around and explore these places. The Task Force could even consider the possibility of providing a small memento for completing the meander, such as a button, pencil, or t-shirt.

Broad support from Task Force members would be needed for this project. In addition to Task Force members, members from the local historical society and the Upper Sioux Community could be involved.

## Chapter IV: Hints on Successful Implementation of BR&E Projects

## Chapter IV. Hints on Successful Implementation of BR&E Projects

The Yellow Medicine County BR&E Task Force Retreat completes the planning and visitation phase of the program. Implementation of the projects selected by the Task Force at the retreat is the next phase. The following tips for successful project implementation come from the experiences of more than 200 communities that have carried out BR&E programs in the past. These tips are reprinted, with permission, from the BR&E program booklet entitled “Local Leadership Team Manual”.<sup>1</sup>

The major tips are:

1. Follow sound strategic planning processes.
2. From the beginning, stress that the BR&E Visitation Program is a two or three-year effort.
3. At the BR&E Task Force Retreat, ask Task Force members to indicate one of the projects on which they will work.
4. Set up a special implementation panel to help the Task Force oversee project implementation progress.
5. Meet at least quarterly to monitor implementation progress.
6. Set a date for the first quarterly Task Force meeting before the community commencement meeting.
7. Plan each quarterly meeting well.
8. Contact the priority project teams between quarterly meetings of the Task Force to encourage them to meet regularly and make progress on their projects.
9. Elect a new Leadership Team at the first quarterly Task Force meeting.
10. Keep in touch with your state sponsor – the University of Minnesota BR&E Strategies Program.
11. Invite regional and state agency personnel to your quarterly meetings.
12. Frequently distribute one page outlines or bulleted lists of projects.
13. Keep publicizing the projects, especially the successes.

Details on these tips are provided in the “Local Leadership Team Manual”.

Another practical tip is to select some priority projects that are easier to accomplish among the other more difficult, long-term projects. Sport teams build momentum by having little victories as they move forward. Sport commentators often comment on who has the momentum in sporting events. In the same way, the BR&E Task Force can build momentum by celebrating its accomplishments as it moves forward toward full implementation of all of its priority projects. Thus picking some “low hanging fruit” among the projects can build the team’s spirit and confidence.

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<sup>1</sup> Loveridge, Scott and George Morse, “Local Leadership Team Manual,” in the series entitled *Implementing Local Business Retention and Expansion Visitation Programs*, Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, NERCRD Publication No. 72 (pages 16-18).

## **Implementation Resources Meeting**

Even if your Task Force has picked the most important issues as priorities, it cannot afford to reinvent projects or programs that other groups are already doing. Even if the other groups are not addressing the issues of the firms in your area well enough, it is probably more productive to work collaboratively with them than to fight over “turf”. The purpose of the implementation resources meeting is to see how you can tap into the expertise and resources of other groups to implement your priority projects. This meeting can be held once with the whole Task Force or as separate meetings for priority project teams. Either way, you should invite three or four people or agencies that might be working on each priority to this meeting. In advance of the meeting, give participants the following questions to answer at the meeting:

1. What work is already being done that is relevant to this project or topic?
2. To what extent are your current programs reaching the firms that the Yellow Medicine County BR&E program visited?
3. How could your agency/organizations and our Task Force collaborate on expanding or starting this type of project to better address the issues of our firms?

The responses that agencies/organizations give are likely to change your recommendations, but you will also pick up partners for the implementation phase and avoid duplication of effort.

See page 13 of the “Local Leadership Team Manual” for more details.

## **Community Commencement Meeting**

At this meeting, the results of your BR&E survey and your priorities will be shared with community leaders, community members, the firms, and state representatives. The meeting is a “commencement ceremony” that celebrates the end of the visitation phase and the beginning of the priority project implementation phase. At the same time, it honors the significant contributions of participants, including the Leadership Team, Task Force, Volunteer Visitors, the firms and others. It is important, of course, to recognize volunteer contributions for their own sake, but also because it reinforces the credibility of the BR&E visitation process as stemming from the breadth and depth of community involvement.

This meeting is informational, rather than a working meeting. The results of the survey and the conclusions of the Task Force are presented to those attending. After the meeting, participants are encouraged to ask questions of Task Force members individually or discuss ways in which they can participate in implementation of specific projects. Several Minnesota communities have successfully used a process where they ended the large group session by breaking up into small groups led by the priority project teams. In this way, those in attendance that are interested in a particular project can get more in-depth information, offer their insights, and possibly become involved in it.

Details on this meeting are given on pages 13-15 of the “Local Leadership Team Manual.”

**SWOT Worksheet**  
**Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats**  
Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program

Review the survey results from this BR&E program and then answer the following questions based both on this data and your knowledge of the region and businesses.

1. What appear to be the firms' or the community's primary strengths and/or weaknesses? (When basing your answer on the data from the survey, please note the question number to help us in preparing the research report.) [**Internal issues**]

**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

2. What appear to be the primary opportunities and/or threats to these businesses? (Again, please note the question number.) [**External issues**]

**Opportunities:**

**Threats:**

## Potential Local BR&E Projects

### Review of Survey Results and Development of Potential Projects for Community of \_\_\_\_\_

**Based on the SWOT analysis, what are some potential projects which the community might initiate to help local firms take advantage of their strengths and opportunities or to overcome their weaknesses and threats? Please use one sheet for each project.**

- 1) What is a key issue or finding from the survey results? (*Could be an opportunity, a strength, a weakness, or a threat.*)
  
- 2) What data from the survey shows the nature of this finding? (*List question number(s) and give a short explanation of the connection.*)
  
- 3) How might the community leaders address the issue outlined in questions 1 and 2?
  
- 4) Which local leaders should be involved in the planning and implementation of this project? (*Be as specific as possible – even listing names when possible.*)
  
- 5) Which non-local public or private agencies, colleges, or firms should be asked to help with the planning and implementation? (*Be as specific as possible – even listing names when possible.*)

**Name of Person(s) Making the Suggestion:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

The report writers sometimes need to check with those making the suggestions.

## Chapter V: Survey Used in Yellow Medicine County

**YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY  
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM**

Business ID: _____ Supplied by Coordinator: _____ Also record on first page of survey
---

BUSINESS NAME:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Website \_\_\_\_\_

PERSON INTERVIEWED: \_\_\_\_\_

Job title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER KEY OFFICIALS IN THIS ESTABLISHMENT:

Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Chief Exec. Officer \_\_\_\_\_

Plant Manager \_\_\_\_\_

Personnel Officer \_\_\_\_\_

VOLUNTEER VISITORS:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Note to Coordinator: After placing the ID number on this cover sheet and on first page of the survey, remove the cover sheet and file separately to ensure confidentiality of results.**

## BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM

### Background

*We believe our existing businesses are our best prospects for future growth. The purpose of this program is to see how we can help them grow.*

- I. This program is sponsored locally by the following organizations:

*Yellow Medicine County Economic Development Authority*  
Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development  
University of Minnesota Extension

- II. Technical and research assistance for this program is provided by the University of Minnesota Extension Service.
- III. Business, government, and educational leaders have agreed to help us work with our local businesses on this program.
- IV. The survey is a cooperative effort involving volunteers drawn from other businesses, local government, and educational institutions.
- V. The objectives of the program are:
1. To demonstrate support for local businesses
  2. To help solve immediate business concerns.
  3. To increase local businesses' ability to compete in the global economy
  4. To establish and implement a comprehensive and coordinated plan for Economic Development (city, county, & townships of YMC) that serves all geographic areas with EDA powers. This plan proposes to coordinate all services and resources without duplication or exclusion.
  5. To build community capacity to sustain growth and development.
  6. Expect to promote and establish public/private partnerships on economic development projects.
  7. Encourage the County EDA to identify their role and effort in partnering and complementing the economic development effort in the area. The county would be expected to secure input from all economic segments both rural and city.
- VI. Confidentiality - Your individual answers to this survey are confidential and will not be released. Your response will be summarized with those of others to produce an overall result in percentages or averages. **If we find an issue in your survey response in which a certain individual or individuals may be able to respond to your concern in a beneficial way, you will be asked at the end of the survey whether you authorize us to release your survey information to them.**
- VII. The "Skip It Rule" - If there is a question that you feel might be best to skip, we will do that; just let us know. There is no need to explain your reasons.
- VIII. Copy of Final Report - Copies of the summary will be provided to all businesses that participate in this survey.

**YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM  
Interview Guide**

**Final Data Tabulation, November 2008**

**Number of Firms Visited = 72**

**Unless noted, all percentages indicate the percentage of firms interviewed.**

**Community or township:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1a. Is all the information on the cover sheet complete and correct? (Circle ONE answer)**

(1) Yes (2) No \_\_\_\_\_ → **1b. If No, make the necessary corrections.**  
76% 8%

**2a. Did your business begin its operation in this community? (Circle ONE answer)**

(1) Yes (2) No \_\_\_\_\_ → **2b. If No, where did you move from and when?**  
72% 18%

<u>Community</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Year</u>
_____	_____	_____

→ **2c. If Yes, what year?** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Which of the following best describes your business in this location? (Circle ONE answer)**

- (1) Locally owned and operated, with one location: 54%
- (2) Locally owned and operated, with more than one location. Please indicate the name(s) of the cities with other locations: 25%
- (3) Franchise: Please indicate where headquarters are located (city, state and country): 7%
- (4) Branch location of a regional, national or international company: Please indicate where your corporate headquarters are located (city, state and country): 11%

**4. Which of the following industry categories best describes your business? (Circle ONE answer)**

- |   |     |  |     |
|---|-----|--|-----|
| (1) agricultural production             | 11% | (9) lodging  | 1%  |
| (2) mining                              | 1%  | (10) tourism/recreational services (i.e., golf, boating, bike rental, theater, etc.) | 0%  |
| (3) construction                        | 4%  | (11) other services  | 13% |
| (4) manufacturing                       | 18% | (12) food and beverage   | 14% |
| (5) transportation and public utilities | 1%  | (13) education   | 0%  |
| (6) wholesale trade                     | 4%  | (14) mail order/internet sales   | 0%  |
| (7) finance, insurance and real estate  | 8%  | (15) government (not including education)  | 0%  |
| (8) retail trade                        | 22% | (16) other (specify)   | 14% |

**Your product / service**

**5. We are interested in learning about your primary products and services.**

a. Name the major products or services offered by this establishment	b. What percentage of your total sales comes from each? (Total should equal 100%)	c. Are sales of this product or service? (Circle ONE answer)
(1)FOR LOCAL USE	%	(1)Increasing (2)Stable (3)Decreasing
(2)	%	(1)Increasing (2)Stable (3)Decreasing
(3)	%	(1)Increasing (2)Stable (3)Decreasing
(4) Other products or services (specify)	%	(1)Increasing (2)Stable (3)Decreasing

**6. What is special or unique about your major products or services? (BR&E visitor: Please take detailed notes here.)**

FOR LOCAL USE

**7 a. Who are your key competitors and where are they located? (List UP TO THREE)**

FOR LOCAL USE

- Name of business \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of business \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of business \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Why are people buying from your competitors?**

FOR LOCAL USE

**Labor Force**

**8. How many workers (including yourself) are employed by you at this location? We'd like you to break this out between full-time and part-time for the two time periods shown.**

Trimmed Mean per firm	a. Full time	b. Part time (defined by the business)	c. Seasonal (hired by the business)	d. Temp agency employees
Currently	9.66	4.66	3.9	3.5
Three years ago	8.04	6.11	2.1	3.5

Total Number of Employees	a. Full time	b. Part time (defined by the business)	c. Seasonal (hired by the business)	d. Temp agency employees
Currently	1,091	543	68.5	28
Three years ago	921	528	33.5	28

9. If the number of employees changed from three years ago, please identify up to 3 reasons for the employment change. (Circle UP TO THREE reasons)

(a)	Technological changes	7%
(b)	Change in management	6%
(c)	Growth in demand, or lack of demand	33%
(d)	Change in profits	1%
(e)	Business did not exist 3 years ago	7%
(f)	Improved or decreased efficiency	10%
(g)	Government regulation	6%
(h)	Increased competition	7%
(i)	Renovation/expansion	3%
(j)	New products/services	4%
(k)	Entered new markets	1%
(l)	Change in subcontracting	1%
(m)	Corporate decisions/policies	4%
(n)	Other _____	18%

10. If you reported any employees as seasonal in question 8c, when is your busy season? (Circle UP TO TWO seasons)

(1) Spring	(2) Summer	(3) Fall	(4) Winter	(5) Varies	(6) Not applicable
10%	6%	11%	4%	0%	

11. What is the average hourly starting wage paid to employees in each category? (If you do not have employees in that category, write Not Applicable or NA) \*Results here are the median of firm responses\*

(a)	Unskilled labor (ex: waiters, janitorial, hotel maids, unskilled manufacturing labor, etc)	\$ <u>7.75</u>
(b)	Precision production/specialty skills	\$ <u>13.00</u>
(c)	Clerical / secretarial	\$ <u>10.00</u>
(d)	Sales	\$ <u>13.00</u>
(e)	Engineers	\$ <u>16.35</u>
(f)	Professional/management	\$ <u>23.46</u>
(g)	Information technology	\$ <u>19.25</u>
(h)	Temporary/contract employees	\$ <u>8.50</u>
(i)	Youth employees	\$ <u>7.50</u>
(j)	Other _____	\$ <u>11.25</u>

12. Does your company have problems recruiting employees in the following categories? (Circle ONE answer per line)

Category	Yes	No	Unsure	Not Applicable
(a) Unskilled labor	25%	38%	0%	10%
(b) Precision production/specialty skills	24%	26%	0%	11%
(c) Clerical / secretarial	4%	43%	0%	17%
(d) Sales	10%	26%	3%	21%
(e) Engineers	3%	18%	0%	31%
(f) Professional/management	11%	29%	1%	22%
(g) Information technology	6%	18%	1%	32%
(h) Temporary/contract employees	4%	24%	1%	26%
(i) Youth employees	3%	29%	1%	26%
(j) Other _____	8%	7%	1%	14%

**13. If you answered "yes" for any category in question X above, identify up to 3 of the most important reasons for your recruiting problem. (Circle UP TO THREE.)**

- 14% (a) Poor work attitudes
- 15% (b) Inadequate labor skills
- 4% (c) High cost of training employees
- 11% (d) High wage rates for labor
- 31% (e) Competition for employees
- 17% (f) Workers will not migrate into the area
- 4% (g) Workers cannot pass screening (drug, criminal record check, etc.)
- 7% (h) Lack of child care
- 11% (i) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Which of the following benefits are available to your full-time employees? (Circle Yes or No for each item)**

(a) Health insurance	53% Yes	No 25%
(b) Life insurance	46% Yes	No 28%
(c) Disability insurance	43% Yes	No 29%
(d) Paid vacation time	67% Yes	No 13%
(e) Paid holidays	64% Yes	No 14%
(f) Paid sick leave	49% Yes	No 25%
(g) Pre-tax Account for Health Care	33% Yes	No 22%
(h) Pre-tax Account for Dependent Care	26% Yes	No 31%
(i) Bonus	53% Yes	No 19%
(j) Profit sharing	22% Yes	No 49%
(k) Stock options of company	4% Yes	No 61%
(l) Tuition reimbursement (for-credit courses)	25% Yes	No 46%
(m) Non-credit training / professional development	33% Yes	No 33%
(n) Pension Plan	15% Yes	No 32%
(o) Retirement/401 K contribution	50% Yes	No 25%
(p) Uniforms/uniform allowance	40% Yes	No 32%
(q) Child care/dependent benefits	10% Yes	No 61%
(r) Employee discounts on merchandise	42% Yes	No 33%
(s) Company car	18% Yes	No 56%
(t) Other (specify) _____	7% Yes	No 22%

**15. Please estimate the commute time for your employees.**

(a) Within a 15 minute drive one way	79%
(b) 16-30 minute drive one way	15%
(c) 31-60 minute drive one way	3%
(d) 61+ minute drive one way	3%

**16. What resources are you currently using to locate new employees? (Circle ALL that apply)**

- 11% (a) Ad in metro / state-wide papers
- 50% (b) Ad in local community papers
- 24% (c) Placement office of four-year, community and / or technical colleges
- 8% (d) Private search businesses
- 54% (e) Referrals from existing employees
- 11% (f) Professional associations
- 13% (g) Minnesota Workforce Center
- 4% (h) Temporary agency / staffing service business
- 19% (i) Hire our own apprentices
- 33% (j) Promote from within
- 15% (k) Hire people who were initially temporary employees
- 7% (l) Job Fair
- 13% (m) Internet / world wide web
- 0% (n) Union
- 10% (o) Sign in the window
- 38% (p) Walk-in
- 57% (q) Word of mouth
- 6% (r) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**17a. Do you expect the number of employees you have in each of the following categories to increase, decrease or stay the same over the next three years? (Circle 1, 2 or 3 for each category)**

**b. If you expect a change, how many employees will be added or subtracted? (Indicate by how many)**

Category	Increase	Stay the Same	Decrease	Net Change	Percent of Employees in this Category
(a) unskilled labor	11%	54%	1%	15	40%
(b) precision production/specialty skills	15%	39%	0%	274.5	18%
(c) clerical/secretarial	7%	42%	4%	8.5	16%
(d) sales	13%	42%	1%	11	22%
(e) engineers	0%	38%	0%	0	0%
(f) professional/management	11%	46%	0%	12.5	47%
(g) information technology	6%	33%	1%	1	8%
(h) temporary/contract employees	4%	33%	1%	-1	10%
(i) youth employees	4%	36%	0%	7	56%
(j) other (specify)	3%	18%	0%	4.5	58%

**18. Overall, how do you rate your employees with respect to their attitude toward work and their productivity? (Circle ONE answer per line) (5=Excellent)**

		Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
4.07 (a) Attitude toward work		33%	38%	21%	3%	0%
4.04 (b) Productivity		28%	47%	15%	4%	0%

**19. Employees and owners often need additional training for their current job. From the list below, select the training topics which are needed but are not already being provided. (Circle Yes or No for each item. For those you answered Yes, write the number of people needing this training.)**

<u>General Skills</u>		<u>Number of people needing this training</u>		
(a)	Basic math	Yes 13%	No 61%	19
(b)	Basic shop math	Yes 13%	No 60%	39
(c)	Reading and writing	Yes 8%	No 64%	9
(d)	Interpersonal communication	Yes 22%	No 51%	85
(e)	English as a Second Language	Yes 7%	No 64%	0
(f)	Diversity training	Yes 10%	No 61%	134
(g)	Customer service	Yes 40%	No 40%	171.5
<u>Managerial Skills</u>				
(h)	Basic accounting	Yes 14%	No 58%	24.5
(i)	Financial management	Yes 19%	No 53%	18.5
(j)	Record keeping	Yes 15%	No 56%	16.5
(k)	Inventory control	Yes 22%	No 50%	24.5
(l)	Business planning	Yes 22%	No 50%	20.5
(m)	Employee management	Yes 31%	No 44%	45.5
(n)	Time / Project management	Yes 32%	No 43%	99.5
<u>Sales and Marketing</u>				
(o)	Sales	Yes 24%	No 49%	47
(p)	Marketing	Yes 24%	No 51%	27
(q)	Selling on the internet	Yes 13%	No 57%	11
<u>Computer Skills</u>				
(r)	Keyboarding	Yes 15%	No 60%	18
(s)	Microsoft Word	Yes 10%	No 61%	35
(t)	Spreadsheets	Yes 21%	No 53%	54.5
(u)	Computer-aided design/ Computer-aided manufacturing	Yes 10%	No 64%	7
(v)	Graphic design and layout	Yes 8%	No 64%	5
(w)	Database management	Yes 14%	No 58%	19
(x)	Website design and maintenance	Yes 14%	No 60%	12
(y)	Computer system installation and maintenance	Yes 14%	No 58%	18
(z)	Computer programming	Yes 7%	No 65%	9
<u>Specialized Skills</u>				
(aa)	Blueprint Reading	Yes 6%	No 67%	10
(bb)	Specialized equipment (Specify)	Yes 13%	No 64%	24
(cc)	Other (Specify) _____	Yes 7%	No 31%	9.5

**20. How do you currently train your employees? (Circle ALL that apply.)**

- 60% (a) Self-taught (manuals, videos, training materials)
- 83% (b) In-house training (one-on-one by supervisor or co-worker, training department classes, etc.)
- 56% (c) Send employees to workshops
- 22% (d) Contract with private vendors for on-site training
- 13% (e) Contract with public vendors (technical colleges, etc.) for on-site training
- 14% (f) On-the-job training (a government supported program)
- 15% (g) Apprenticeships
- 26% (h) Distance learning (correspondence, on-line / internet, TV)
- 6% (i) Other (Please list) \_\_\_\_\_
- 1% (j) Do not provide any employee training

**Customers**

**21. We are interested in the location of your customers. Please estimate the percent of your gross sales come from the following locations:**

a. Local (within 25 miles)?	64 percent
b. Regional (26-100 miles)?	16 percent
c. Outside the region but in the United States?	18 percent
d. Outside of the U.S.?	2 percent

**22a. Is your business currently exporting internationally? (Circle ONE answer)**

14% (1) Yes, we export directly from our business and / or we sell our product internationally through another company which exports it (ex: US parent company, etc.)

6% (2) Not now, but we are starting plans to export

**22b. 69% (3) No: What prevents you from exporting your product? (Circle ALL that apply.)**

- 19% (a) Business is too small
- 31% (b) Business designed to serve specific area
- 3% (c) Lack of knowledge of foreign countries/markets
- 3% (d) Lack of specific export knowledge
- 0% (e) Restrictive state and or federal regulations
- 4% (f) Language barrier
- 6% (g) Concerns about receiving payment
- 11% (h) Never considered it before
- 3% (i) Tough competition
- 4% (j) Costs / risks are too high
- 17% (k) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**23. For businesses who export internationally or are planning to do so in the near future – all others, skip to question 24.**

**23a. In which countries or regions of the world do you currently sell products, or plan to sell in the future? (Circle Now or Future for ALL that apply)**

- (a) Canada 11%
- (b) Mexico 4%
- (c) Central America (not including Mexico) 4%
- (d) South America 7%
- (e) Western Europe 3%
- (f) Eastern Europe 1%
- (g) Russia 4%
- (h) Africa 4%
- (i) China 6%
- (j) Japan 4%
- (k) Asia, other than China or Japan 4%
- (l) Australia 6%
- (m) Other \_\_\_\_\_ 4%

**23b. Identify problems, if any, that you have exporting your product(s)? (Circle ALL that apply)**

- 3% (a) Transportation of product
- 0% (b) Lack of export financing
- 1% (c) Restrictive state and or federal regulations
- 3% (d) Inadequate knowledge of foreign countries/markets
- 4% (e) Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 4% (f) I do not have problems exporting my product(s)

## Changes

24. a. Are there any major technological innovations on the horizon in your industry that might affect your company? (*Circle ONE answer*)

26% 39% 29%  
Yes No Not Sure  
(1) (2) (3)

→ 24b. If No or Not Sure, skip to question 25.

→ 24c. If Yes, what are these?

→ 24d. If Yes, will these new technologies require retraining of your labor force?  
(*Circle ONE answer*)

(1) Yes (2) No  
21% 11%

25a. Do you have any plans to modernize or expand your present buildings(s) or equipment? (*Circle ONE answer*)

35% Yes No 49%  
(1) (2)

→ 25b. If No, skip to Question 26.

→ 25c. If Yes, what is planned?

→ 25d. If Yes, when will the work begin (year)? \_\_\_\_\_

## Future Location Decisions

26. Are you currently considering? (*Circle ALL that apply*)

- 1% (a) Downsizing → If yes, skip to Question 27
- 13% (b) Selling → If yes, skip to Question 27
- 1% (c) Moving → If yes, go to Question 27
- 3% (d) Closing → If yes, go to Question 27
- 7% (e) Merging with or acquiring another business → If yes, skip to Question 29
- 28% (f) Expanding -- at this location → If yes, go to Question 29
- 14% (g) Expanding -- adding another location → If yes, go to Question 28
- 6% (h) Other changes to business plan → If yes, skip to Question 29
- 42% (i) None of the above → If yes, skip to Question 29

27. If yes to Question 27 (a), (b), (c) or (d), why are you considering downsizing, selling, moving or closing?

(Circle ALL that apply)

- 3% (1) Changing market conditions
- (2) Overcrowded building
- (3) No land for expansion
- (4) Transportation problems
- (5) Crime/vandalism
- (6) Low work productivity
- (7) Environmental concerns
- 3% (8) Rigid code enforcement (including ordinances and building codes)
- (9) High local taxes
- (10) High state taxes
- (11) Lease expiration
- (12) Poor telecommunications
- 3% (13) Insufficient labor supply
- 6% (14) Retiring
- 3% (15) Another business opportunity
- (16) Business incentives from other jurisdiction(s)
- 4% (17) Trying to sell business but unable to sell it
- 1% (18) Better location for more exposure / traffic
- 4% (19) Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

28. If moving (Yes to Question 27c) or expanding at another location (Yes to Question 27g), where are you considering? (Circle ALL that apply)

- 8% (1) In same city as currently located
- 3% (2) Another city in this county (specify city) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6% (3) Another county in the state (specify city) \_\_\_\_\_
- 1% (4) Another state (specify city and state) \_\_\_\_\_
- 0% (5) Outside of the United States (specify city and country) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4% (6) Undecided

29a. Do you rent / lease or does this business own this facility? (Circle ONE answer)

- 15% (1) Rent /Lease
- 81% (2) Own

→ 29b. If Rent / Lease, when does the current rental agreement expire?

30a. Does your company currently own or rent / lease sufficient property to allow for expansion if necessary? (Circle ONE answer)

- 58% (1) Yes
- 3% (2) Maybe
- 36% (3) No

→ 30b. If Maybe or No, what type of land, buildings, and space needs do you foresee? (Ex: number of square feet)

31. Are there any other changes in business plans for the next three years? (Circle ALL that apply)

- 53% (1) No change: If no change, skip to Question 33.
- 8% (2) Change in operations
- 17% (3) Change in mix of goods/services
- 19% (4) Add or subtract product lines
- 7% (5) Change production technology
- 6% (6) Other \_\_\_\_\_

32. What impact will your answer from Questions 24-31 have on the number of employees? (Circle ONE answer on the left, and if you choose 2 or 3 also, answer the jobs question)

- 33% (1) No change  
 24% (2) Add employees: About how many jobs will be added? 260 Jobs  
 1% (3) Reduce employees: About how many jobs will be lost? 0 Jobs  
 1% (4) Reduce schedule for hourly employees:  
 (a) About how many hours / week per employee? 20  
 (b) How many employees will be on a reduced schedule? 1

**Community Factors**

33. In the community in which your business is located, are the following business factors more favorable, less favorable or about the same as your direct competitors from other communities? (Circle ONE answer for each factor)

Average		Much More Favorable 5	Somewhat More Favorable 4	About the Same 3	Somewhat Less Favorable 2	Much Less Favorable 1
2.31	a) Availability of Skilled Labor	1%	8%	43%	19%	7%
2.52	b) Availability of Unskilled Labor	1%	10%	51%	17%	1%
2.93	c) Worker Stability	3%	19%	57%	4%	1%
2.99	d) Worker Productivity	3%	26%	53%	0%	0%
2.91	e) Wage Rates	3%	25%	40%	19%	1%
2.09	f) Employee Health Care Costs	0%	10%	44%	11%	3%
1.15	g) Union Profile	7%	1%	18%	4%	6%
2.06	h) Technical Training Programs	3%	11%	36%	10%	6%
2.51	i) Availability of Land	7%	21%	33%	10%	3%
2.60	j) Cost of Land	8%	24%	29%	7%	4%
2.13	k) Availability of Buildings	4%	11%	28%	21%	11%
2.71	l) Cost of Buildings	6%	22%	43%	3%	4%
2.04	m) Proximity to Major Markets	0%	4%	42%	21%	10%
1.88	n) Proximity to Raw Materials	1%	0%	42%	19%	7%
2.29	o) Proximity to Service Suppliers	1%	3%	50%	24%	1%
2.88	p) Highway Accessibility	6%	17%	49%	14%	4%
1.70	q) Railroad Service	1%	7%	32%	10%	8%
1.79	r) Accessibility to Major Airport	0%	1%	36%	18%	14%
2.25	s) Local Airport	8%	6%	39%	10%	10%
2.74	t) Electricity Cost	1%	4%	74%	7%	0%
2.82	u) Electricity Reliability	3%	3%	78%	4%	0%
2.56	v) Natural Gas Cost	0%	1%	72%	10%	0%
2.60	w) Natural Gas Reliability	1%	0%	78%	3%	0%
2.56	x) Unemployment Insurance Costs	1%	4%	69%	4%	1%
2.69	y) Workers Compensations Rates	1%	6%	69%	7%	3%
2.62	z) Local Taxes	1%	17%	53%	8%	3%
2.61	aa) State Taxes	0%	4%	68%	10%	3%
2.75	bb) Availability of Credit	6%	8%	61%	7%	1%
2.50	cc) Cost of Credit	3%	3%	65%	7%	1%
2.32	dd) Environmental Regulations	0%	3%	64%	7%	3%

**34. Please rank in order the three factors from Question #33 you would consider the greatest *strengths* of this community as a location for your business and the three factors you would consider the greatest *weaknesses* for your business. (Specify by corresponding letters in Question 34 above if the response comes from the list)**

**Strengths (Rank from 1 – 3.)**

1. Worker Stability 11%
2. Availability of Skilled Workers 10%
3. Highway Accessibility 10%

**Weaknesses (Rank from 1 – 3.)**

1. Availability of Skilled Workers 14%
2. Proximity to Major Markets 11%
3. Wage Rates 6%

**35. Based on the following community services, please rate the desirability of this location as a place for your company to do business. (Circle ONE answer for each item)**

	Average	Excellent 5	Very Good 4	Good 3	Fair 2	Poor 1
1) Street Maintenance	3.17	13%	19%	44%	15%	4%
2) Snow Removal	3.27	17%	24%	38%	11%	6%
3) Drainage	3.21	14%	26%	38%	11%	3%
4) Water	3.36	18%	25%	39%	8%	3%
5) Sewer	3.36	17%	25%	46%	1%	3%
6) Solid Waste Disposal	3.24	15%	25%	42%	6%	3%
7) Law Enforcement	3.34	17%	26%	39%	7%	6%
8) Fire Protection	3.94	31%	40%	25%	0%	0%
9) Emergency Medical Services	3.96	38%	32%	25%	0%	0%
10) Health Care Facilities	3.55	31%	26%	25%	7%	3%
11) Zoning and Permitting	2.54	8%	18%	40%	4%	4%
12) Code Enforcement	2.34	8%	13%	39%	8%	3%
13) Financial Institutions	3.23	13%	26%	43%	6%	6%
14) Chamber of Commerce	2.71	11%	18%	36%	10%	8%
15) Economic Development Authority	2.77	11%	19%	33%	14%	4%
Public Elementary and Secondary	3.38					
16) Schools (K-12)		14%	39%	31%	6%	6%
17) Community Education	3.06	10%	28%	38%	10%	6%
Higher Education within a	3.53					
18) reasonable drive		21%	33%	33%	1%	3%
19) Public Library	3.28	19%	25%	39%	4%	1%
20) Child Care	2.81	10%	19%	43%	8%	1%
21) Religious choices	3.63	17%	42%	32%	3%	1%
22) Cultural opportunities	2.31	4%	11%	29%	29%	14%
23) Recreational Opportunities	2.91	6%	24%	38%	22%	4%
24) Housing Costs	3.17	8%	31%	40%	11%	1%
25) Housing Availability	2.99	10%	21%	42%	14%	6%

**Telecommunications**

**36. Which type of Internet service does your business use? (Circle ALL that apply)**

- 11% (a) None
- 6% (b) Dial-up
- 7% (c) Cable
- 54% (d) DSL telephone
- 10% (e) T-1 lines
- 1% (f) Fiber
- 1% (g) Powerline
- 1% (h) WiMAX
- 13% (i) WiFi
- 7% (j) Satellite
- 0% (k) Don't Know

**37a. Are you satisfied with your current internet service? (Circle ONE answer)**

72% (1) Yes

10% (2) No → **37b. If no, which type of Internet Service would be your first choice?**

*(Circle ONE answer)*

- 1% (a) Cable
- 3% (b) DSL telephone
- 6% (c) T-1 lines
- 1% (d) Fiber
- 0% (e) Powerline
- 0% (f) WiMAX
- 0% (g) WiFi
- 0% (h) Satellite
- 0% (i) Don't Know

**38a. Is cell phone reception or “dead” areas an issue for you? (Circle ONE answer)**

(1)Yes 39% (2) No 60%

**b. Is two-way radio reception (poor or dead) an issue? (Circle ONE answer)**

(1)Yes 7% (2) No 65%

**39 a. Do the following community features have a positive impact, no impact, or negative impact on your business? (Circle ONE answer for each item)**

	Very Positive <u>Impact</u>		No <u>Impact</u>		Very Negative <u>Impact</u>
+0.75 (a) Natural environment	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.56 (b) Historic buildings (barns, downtowns, etc.)	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.71 (c) Farm landscapes	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
-0.33 (d) Distance from large metro areas	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+1.31 (e) Small town atmosphere	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.23 (f) Community diversity	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
-0.26 (g) Freeway access	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.70 (h) Fishing	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+1.00 (i) Hunting	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.61 (j) Seasonal tourism	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.51 (k) Museums/historic sites	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.30 (l) Activities for children and teens	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.79 (m) Festivals or events	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.34 (n) Arts and cultural events	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
-0.06 (o) Lodging facilities	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.37 (p) Meeting facilities	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.42 (q) Eating establishments	+2	+1	0	-1	-2
+0.83 (r) Other _____	+2	+1	0	-1	-2

**b. Which of the features listed in Question 39a do you feel should be the focus of a marketing image for this community? (Please list the LETTERS for UP TO THREE choices)**

Small Town Atmosphere 40% First choice  
 Natural Environment 14% Second choice  
 Seasonal Tourism 7% Third choice

**40. Do you think promoting the area to visitors is in the best interests of your business? (Circle ONE answer)**

(1) Yes 72% (2) No 21%

**41. a. Please rate the following factors about retail in this community. (Circle ONE for each item)**

	Average	5 = Excellent	4 = Very Good	3 = Good	2 = Fair	1 = Poor
(a) Exterior atmosphere of the area (e.g. front entrances, rear entrances, landscaping, street trees, store fronts, sidewalks, cleanliness, signage)	3.07	6%	26%	40%	19%	6%
(b) Parking situation (e.g. number of spaces, location)	3.16	7%	24%	50%	11%	6%
(c) Feeling of safety (e.g. lighting, security)	3.91	28%	42%	22%	3%	3%
(d) Variety of businesses	2.30	0%	15%	22%	36%	24%
(e) Special events or promotions in the shopping area	2.17	0%	7%	25%	42%	22%
(f) Variety of merchandise	2.20	0%	8%	28%	36%	25%
(g) Prices	2.73	0%	13%	49%	33%	3%
(h) Advertising	2.60	0%	8%	46%	32%	7%
(i) Group advertising	2.11	0%	4%	28%	32%	26%
(j) Evening hours	1.97	0%	4%	22%	35%	31%
(k) Weekend hours	2.24	0%	6%	33%	32%	22%
(l) Coordinated store hours	2.47	1%	7%	40%	32%	14%
(m) Quality of merchandise handled by merchants	3.26	6%	26%	53%	10%	1%
(n) Customer service	3.51	15%	35%	31%	14%	1%
(o) Variety of places to eat	2.72	3%	18%	35%	31%	10%
(p) Knowledge and friendliness of local personnel	3.73	13%	53%	26%	4%	1%
(q) Technology infrastructure	2.73	1%	15%	42%	26%	8%
(r) Public restrooms	2.49	4%	11%	26%	38%	15%
(s) Traffic flow / signage	3.19	8%	26%	42%	14%	6%
(t) Other (specify)	3.00	1%	1%	3%	1%	1%

**b. What three items from the above list is the most important to be improved (Identify UP TO THREE LETTERS from the above list)**

- Variety of Businesses --- 42%
- Variety of Merchandise – 25%
- Special Events -----21%

42. Considering all the factors in Question 41, how would you rate the overall atmosphere in your local shopping area? (Circle ONE answer)

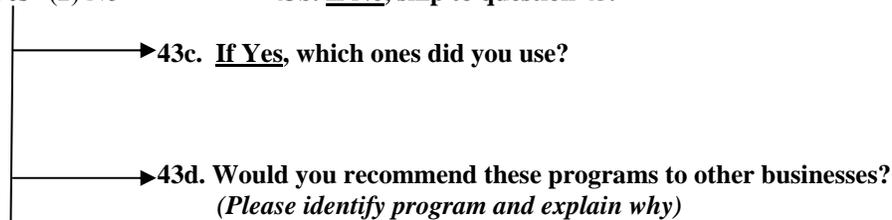
Average = 2.90

- 4% (5) Excellent
- 15% (4) Very Good
- 51% (3) Good
- 17% (2) Fair
- 8% (1) Poor

**Technical Assistance**

43a. During the past three years, have you used any local, regional, state or federal programs to help your business? For example, Chamber of Commerce, local Economic Development Authority (EDA), Small Business Administration (SBA), USDA Rural Development, Workforce Center, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), local Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), Small Business Development Center (SBDC), initiative foundation, etc. (Circle ONE answer)

33% 58%  
(1) Yes (2) No → 43b. If No, skip to question 45.



(1) Yes (2) No  
11% 21%

→ 43f. If Yes, what do you suggest?

**44a. Would you like additional information concerning any of the following subjects? (Circle ALL that apply. Then in the next column, rank UP TO THREE most important with a \*)**

#	Topics for all businesses	Most important (percent)
3	(1) Business plan development	3%
5	(2) Passing business on to heirs / succession planning	6%
7	(3) Continuous improvement	7%
7	(4) State or federal financing programs	7%
4	(5) Job Opportunity Zone (JobZ)	4%
3	(6) Tax increment financing (TIF)	1%
10	(7) Employee recruitment & hiring	6%
3	(8) Labor/management relations	3%
3	(9) Employee benefits	4%
3	(10) School-to-work / school-business partnerships	0%
4	(11) Selling to government	1%
1	(12) International trade	1%
8	(13) Internet options	3%
4	(14) Chamber of Commerce	3%
4	(15) Economic Development Authority	1%
5	(16) Regional Development Commission	3%
7	(17) Tourism development	4%
2	(18) Tourism loan program	0%
3	(19) Recycling business wastes / EPA regulations	1%
3	(20) OSHA and other safety regulations	3%
4	(21) Total quality management	3%
1	(22) Other (specify) _____	1%

Additional topics for manufacturers (non-manufacturers please skip to Question 45)

0	(23) Adopting new manufacturing technology	_____
0	(24) Just-in-time inventory	_____
0	(25) Upgrading manufacturing systems	_____
0	(26) Statistical process control	_____
0	(27) Computer-aided manufacturing	_____
0	(28) Statistical process control	_____
0	(29) Six sigma	_____
0	(30) Root cause analysis	_____
0	(31) ISO and/or quality standards	_____
0	(32) Automation and robotics	_____
0	(33) Documentation	_____
0	(34) Cell manufacturing	_____
1	(35) Lean manufacturing	_____
0	(36) World class manufacturing	_____
0	(37) Reconfigure business processes	_____

**b. Do you have any specific questions or special needs on any of the topics listed in Question 44a. or are there any other topics not listed above? (Describe program and needs)**

**45. What is your overall opinion of your community (i.e. where your business is) as a place to conduct business? (Circle ONE answer)**

Average	(5) Excellent	(4) Very Good	(3) Good	(2) Fair	(1) Poor
3.54	15%	40%	28%	13%	3%

**46. What is your overall opinion of your community (i.e. where your business is) as a place to live? (Circle ONE answer)**

Average	(5) Excellent	(4) Very Good	(3) Good	(2) Fair	(1) Poor
3.82	24%	46%	24%	3%	4%

**47. Are you interested in any of the following assistance with energy management: (Circle ALL that apply)**

38% (a) Energy audit  
22% (b) Conservation plan  
25% (c) Alternatives for energy-saving controls  
33% (d) Alternatives for energy-saving equipment

**48. To what extent are your (inbound and/or outbound) transportation costs a competitive disadvantage for your business? (Circle ONE answer)**

	Very Much				Not at all
Average	5	4	3	2	1
<b>2.93</b>	17%	26%	15%	14%	26%

**49. Have you used the Granite Falls or Canby technical college for (circle ONE answer for each item):**

(a) Employee-search? (1) Yes 36% (2) No 60%  
(c) Continuing education, workshops, seminars or customized training?  
(1) Yes 38% (2) No 53%

**50. What are the top two frustrations of owning your own business?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ FOR LOCAL USE \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**51. We have covered many issues. Please help us set some priorities on how we can help your business or what we should work on to help all of our existing businesses grow and expand. Please give your additional comments.**

**52. If we find an issue in your survey response in which a certain individual or individuals may be able to respond to your concern in a beneficial way, do you authorize us to release your survey information to them?**  
**67%**

- (1) **Yes** Your contact information will be shared with the resource person to aid them in understanding your company and the concern. Please sign here to authorize release of your survey information to the appropriate, selected resources:

---

**28%**

- (2) **No** We will provide you information about the resources available to assist you, and you will make the first contact with the resource. The resource will not have access to your survey.

*Thank you for participating in our Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Visitation Program. We appreciate the time you've given us and the contribution your business is making to our local economy.*

*We cannot promise to solve the concerns you mentioned, but we will promise to try. If we can help you in the future, please call:*

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status or sexual orientation.

## Chapter VI: Additional Information Related to BR&E Potential Projects



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## Access E Internet Education

### Helping Minnesotans tap the potential of the Internet

The Internet is key to the survival and growth of small towns, small businesses and small government. If you have information, entertainment, or connections that others want, you can compete or collaborate with anyone anywhere. Access E.info programs provide online resources and hands-on workshops that help small businesses, local government, nonprofits and community leaders discover how to use the Internet to its greatest capacity. Internet users in your community can generate more local creativity, more Internet skills, and more demand for better technology.



Cyber Café, Wadena, MN.

#### Feature



**Is your community stuck in the Internet slow lane?**

[What can you do?](#) — Here's a list of ideas for how you can involve everyone.

#### Educational Offerings

Local sponsors bring educators to your area for hands-on training developed with your community in mind.

**Access E Internet Education programs and online resources are available for different audiences:**

**Access eCommerce** — helps small businesses participate in the global economy — encouraging local business startup and growth. [Contact an educator.](#)

**Access eNonProfit** — helps the staff of nonprofit organizations understand the potential of their web presence, develop a web strategy and find affordable resources. [Contact an educator.](#)

**Access eGovernment** — aids local governments in planning dynamic information-rich websites that meet the needs of citizens and government. [Contact an educator.](#)

**Access eBroadband** — is a primer on high-speed internet access, or broadband. What is it? How does it work? What are the advantages? [Contact an educator.](#)

**Access eInternet** — helps people new to the Internet learn

## Related

### In the News

- [Extension Pilot Project, Connecting Rural Communities, Deemed a Success PDF](#)
- [Get Connected PDF](#)

### Related Programs

- [At Your Service](#)
- [Public Finance](#)
- [Retail Analysis and Development](#)
- [U-Connect](#)
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### Related Resources

**Find materials on these topics:**

- [Citizenship](#)
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### Our Products

[See our Internet Learning manuals.](#)

### Also Recommended

[You — Yes, You — Are TIME's Person of the Year](#)

### Success Stories

about getting connected, browsers, email, searching, and web safety. [Contact an educator](#).

**Access eCommunity** — is a local leader's guide to mobilizing a community to use the Internet. Learn how creating community content on the web gets people excited about technology. (Developed in collaboration with the Southern Rural Development Center.) [Contact an Educator in Leadership and Civic Engagement](#) or [Community Economics](#).

#### **Who has sponsored Access E.info workshops in Minnesota?**

Bring Access E.info to your community! Sponsors like these have seen the local benefits:

- Sugarloaf Cove Interpretive Center, Cook County, MN
- West Central Sustainable Rural Partnership
- Blandin Foundation "Get Broadband" Program
- Pine Technical College, Pine County, MN
- East Central Arts Council, Cambridge, MN
- Blandin Foundation Goods for the Woods program
- Local governments in Sherburne County
- Local governments in Pine County
- Chambers of Commerce

## Contact Information

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Fax: 612-625-1955

### **Program Team**

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[E-Commerce Case Studies  
of Entrepreneur Use of  
the Internet](#)

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## New from Community Vitality

[Horizons initiative to help  
rural MN](#)

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## **Chaska turns Wi-Fi over to MSP: community-wide wireless network proved troublesome for city government to handle**

Government officials of Chaska, Minn., a suburban community located just outside the Twin Cities area, pride themselves on delivering innovative services to increase the quality of life of residents. For example, to ensure consistent levels of service and pricing, the city launched its own electric utility.

In 1998, city officials discovered that telecommunications providers in the area were not meeting the broadband data transmission needs of the schools in the community. To resolve the problem, city personnel created chaska.net, a wireless Internet service provider owned and operated by the city.

In 2004, with demand for broadband connectivity on the rise across the community of 7,500 homes and more than 18,000 residents, the city constructed a metro-scale, Wi-Fi network using a combination of Tropos Networks' MetroMesh architecture, point-to-multipoint wireless backhaul connections and the city's existing fiber network. Chaska.net initially used only wireless point-to-multipoint technology to provide connectivity. With this upgrade, Chaska became one of the first communities in the country to deploy a citywide Wi-Fi network, and the first to operate a municipally hosted ISP over a meshed wireless system.

As the number of chaska.net subscribers grew, Chaska officials realized that the city did not have the resources in place to fully support customers' needs. Chaska employed only two to three temporary staff members to provide phone support to subscribers.

"We weren't able to respond to calls as they were coming in. Most of the time, callers ended up leaving a voice mail message and the support staff would have to respond on a return-call basis," says Noel Graczyk, administrative services director for the city. "We needed to improve the call center response so that customers could talk live to an operator and deal with problem resolution during the initial call."

Making matters worse, in June of 2005, chaska.net began to experience significant problems with network performance. "There were areas of the city where the network was operating, but not to maximum efficiency," says Graczyk. "As a result, customers were experiencing great difficulty in connecting to the network, sometimes resulting in hours of inaccessibility and lost efficiency."

### **NO ANALYSIS CAPABILITIES**

More calls began to come in to the support center, putting an even greater strain on the small staff. "There were two sets of problems," Graczyk says. "The first was related to the ongoing performance of the network. The second was related to customer-usage of the network, such as not knowing how to use e-mail or firewall protection. We didn't have in place the tools we needed to track and analyze the calls that were coming in so we could see which calls were about old problems and which were new problems."

As a result, customer usage issues bled into network performance issues, complicating the process of resolving problems for customers in a timely manner.

Chaska.net and Tropos made significant changes in the network to improve performance. "But the inherent problems of managing and monitoring the network on an on-going basis and providing efficient customer support were still there," Graczyk

says.

Largely because of the difficulties in providing effective customer support and a more reliable network, chaska.net lost a large number of its subscribers. City managers decided Chaska needed to hire a company that would take over support and provide continuous monitoring of the wireless network.

Officials began looking for a vendor in the fall of 2005 to manage contact center calls and responses, as well as network performance. They evaluated a number of vendors and determined that Siemens Communications could deliver a comprehensive managed-services offering with all of the elements they needed. Siemens' venture capital investment in Tropos Networks in September 2005 also played a role in the decision to select it to provide its managed services service desk and network operations center (NOC) support of the chaska.net network.

Siemens Communications began supporting chaska.net in February, by monitoring performance of the meshed wireless network, as well as back-end network infrastructure that includes the city's supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) center components. By monitoring and managing the SCADA components, the city has improved performance and minimized risk of failure of the systems that control the delivery of water through the municipality.

#### NETWORK NOW MONITORED

Siemens also took over the management and support of a separate wireless, point-to-multipoint network service--not based on Wi-Fi--the city had been offering to business customers for five years.

With Siemens HiPath managed services, "We know that any problems related to the network itself are being resolved," says Graczyk. A network performance-management capability tracks network performance statistics that can be used to recommend enhancements as the chaska.net subscriber base and overall network is expanded.

"Siemens is not only monitoring the network 24/7--something we did not have the resources to do internally--but is also providing features that allow us to improve the performance of the network," Graczyk says. "And the help desk constantly communicates with NOC services, allowing us to easily manage what were two separate problems."

Subscribers now benefit from expanded hours of coverage offered from the service desk and quick resolutions to their problems. Chaska officials say the improvements in support, coupled with better network service, will lead to increases in the number of subscribers and the city's revenue returns. At the time Siemens began supporting chaska.net, the network had about 2,300 residential and business subscribers. The city's goal is to reach 4,000 subscribers within two years.

The expansion in subscriber base is expected to come from two sources: former customers who left because they were not satisfied with the quality of support services and new customers from the growing number of households in the community. City officials launched an intensive marketing campaign to promote the fact that network performance and customer support have been substantially improved. The program included direct mailings to households and local news coverage about the change in service.

"But word of mouth is the most effective marketing," says City Administrator David Pokorney. "We're hoping customers will see a difference in service and tell others about it."

"The overriding reason we created the partnership with Siemens was to take our Internet service to the next level," says Pokorney. "We were providing good service before, but to provide great service we needed to improve network support and management."

# When to Exit? A Small Business Owner's Biggest Dilemma

By Lloyd Atkins

There are only a few certainties in life; death, taxes, and one thing few successful small business owners realize or want to realize, the day they will be faced with perhaps their biggest dilemma, “How do I exit and when?” In this regard, it is not unusual that few successful small business owners understand the importance of having a good succession plan or exit strategy.

The failure of business owners/founders to plan effectively for succession can lead to an unfavorable and painful transition. If the business is a family-owned business, it may lead to a loss of family control. These undesirable outcomes can be avoided if the business owner is willing to step back from the business and look into the future.

Once the small business owner has made the initial decision to leave the business, there are some important considerations to keep in mind before making the final decision:

1. **Succession planning takes time.** Building a successful business doesn't occur overnight, and equally so, exiting a business will take time in planning and execution of the exit strategy.
2. **Potential stakeholder barriers to the succession planning process.** In every business

enterprise there are a number of “interested parties” or stakeholders who have an interest in the success or failure of the business. These stakeholders include the owner's spouse, family, employees, clients, and peers. Each may have a particular reason for the small business owner not to leave the business. Therefore, it is important for the business owner to understand what their concerns are and that these concerns can be major factors in the final decision on leaving.

3. **Succession planning occurs in stages.** A good way to view succession planning is in stages. The initial stage is a period of anticipation and preparation. The second stage involves the actual handing over control and leadership. The final stage occurs after the transition has occurred and there is a period of adjustment and reflection by the small business owner.

Within each of these stages, the business owner is involved in the development of a number of important plans that may impact the nature and timing of the final exit strategy:

1. **A strategic business plan:** This plan allows the business owner to

consider the future financial strength and potential market growth of the business.

2. **A personal financial plan:** Helps determine the current financial strength and future financial goals of the business owners.
3. **An estate plan:** This plan helps the business owner to determine current and future tax consequences of selling the business.

The final steps in the succession planning process involve the actual implementation of the succession plan:

- **Identifying and selecting a successor:** Determine the *best qualified* and *best suited* match as your successor. Ideally, this person understands the business legacy you have built and will be committed to your employees and your clients.
- **Transition period with the chosen successor:** Establish a formal phased-in “passing of the torch” period in which the business owner introduces his successor to key employees and clients.
- **Handing over the keys!:** The final and official change in ownership and leadership.
- **Monitoring the progress of the successor's development:** The periodic checking with the chosen

successor to offer any assistance or advice you may give.

These steps may take years to successfully implement. Thus, it is important for any small business owner contemplating leaving his business to

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## Business Sense

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**start planning now.** The good news for the small business owner is that there is help with planning an exit strategy or succession plan. Talk with your accountant, lawyer, and banker. Each can provide specialized advice and services. Also, feel free to contact a Georgia SBDC Network consultant.

*Lloyd Atkins is a business consultant with the Georgia State University SBDC. To find your local SBDC, call the state office at 706-542-2762 or locate it on the web at [www.sbdc.uga.edu](http://www.sbdc.uga.edu).*

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## Succession Planning for Wyoming Small Business



According to the Small Business Administration, 90% of the 21 million U.S. businesses are family-owned, and one-third of the Fortune 500 are either family-owned or family-controlled. Yet only 30 percent of family-run companies today succeed into the second generation. An even smaller 15 percent survive into the third. The reason, according to many experts, is obvious: the lack of an orderly succession plan.

If you own a family business and want to pass on the business when you retire, it is important for you to develop a thoughtful succession plan. You will need to consider who is going to manage the business when you no longer work in the business and how ownership will be transferred. How will your retirement funds be paid? What is the value of the business?

Our succession planning counselor, [Leonard Holler](#), will help you understand and manage these issues and assist with a smooth transition between you and the future owners of your company. With family businesses, succession planning can be especially complicated because of the relationships and emotions involved and because most people are not comfortable discussing topics such as aging, death, and their financial affairs. Mr. Holler, who is a Certified Public Accountant and business valuation specialist, will help to take some of the fear and uncertainty out of this important planning process for you, your family and your business.

[Sign up online](#) for an appointment with our succession planning specialist, [Leonard Holler](#). Or call WyomingEntrepreneur.Biz at 1-307-234-6683.

## minnesota small business development center

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### Contact Information

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The Southwest SBDC Regional Office is located at Southwest Minnesota State University in the Science and Technology (ST) building, room # 105

Click [HERE](#) for a map of the University.

The office is open Monday through Friday,  
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

EMAIL: [SBDC@southwestmsu.edu](mailto:SBDC@southwestmsu.edu)

Telephone: 1-800-642-0684 extension 7386 or  
1-507-537-7386

Fax: 507-537-6094

---



Liz Struve  
Program Director



Janice Robinson  
Program Coordinator

### Marshall Regional Office

Small Business Development Center  
Southwest Minnesota State University  
1501 State Street, ST 105  
Marshall, Minnesota 56258



# EXPORT MINNESOTA

Call our **Trade Assistance Helpline** at 651-259-7498  
or E-Mail us at [mto@state.mn.us](mailto:mto@state.mn.us).

The Minnesota Trade Office (MTO) promotes and assists in the expansion of exports and foreign direct investments that contribute to the growth of the Minnesota economy. Our services are tailored for new exporters as well as experienced international companies, and include education and training, information and marketing, and counseling.

The MTO also sponsors and coordinates [trade missions](#) to targeted countries, including missions led by the governor. Participating companies find these events an excellent way to establish trade contacts and gain first-hand knowledge of new markets.

From export training classes to individualized counseling and participation in international trade shows, we can equip you with the tools needed to succeed in global markets. We'll help you assess your product or the marketability of your services, and work with you to develop a strategy that will get your product into the international markets.

The Trade Office also helps foreign companies invest in Minnesota through new business startups or expansions. Whether seeking joint venture partners, products to source or an attractive U.S. business location, it pays to consider Minnesota.



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	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Minnesota West Community &amp; Technical College</h2>												
<table border="1"> <tr><td>Information For</td></tr> <tr><td>Students</td></tr> <tr><td>Business &amp; Industry</td></tr> <tr><td>News &amp; Media</td></tr> <tr><td>System Employees</td></tr> <tr><td>System Information</td></tr> <tr><td>About the System</td></tr> <tr><td>Board of Trustees</td></tr> <tr><td>Centers of Excellence</td></tr> <tr><td>Chancellor's Office</td></tr> <tr><td>System Foundation</td></tr> <tr><td>System Gateway</td></tr> </table>	Information For	Students	Business & Industry	News & Media	System Employees	System Information	About the System	Board of Trustees	Centers of Excellence	Chancellor's Office	System Foundation	System Gateway	<p><b>City/population:</b> Canby/1,835 ; Granite Falls/3,057; Jackson/3,469; Pipestone/4,342; Worthington/11,349</p> <p><b>Tuition and fees (2008-2009):</b> \$4,807</p> <p><b>FAFSA code:</b> 005263</p> <p><b>Enrollment:</b>  Total number students served: 4,452  Full-year equivalent enrollment: 2,048  Percent female: 57.0%  Percent male: 43.0%  Percent students of color: 7.8%</p> <p><b>Degrees offered:</b> Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, Associate in Applied Science, diplomas, certificates</p> <p><b>Largest programs:</b> Liberal arts transfer, nursing, electrician, law enforcement, powerline</p> <p><b>Unique programs:</b> Biotechnology lab technician, renewable energy technology, power sports technology, wind energy technology</p> <p><b>Intercollegiate sports:</b> NJCAA Division III women's basketball, golf, softball, volleyball; men's baseball, basketball, football, golf, wrestling</p> <p><b>Student activities:</b> Student government, student and professional organizations, Phi Theta Kappa honor society, Business Professionals of America, SkillsUSA, intramural sports</p> <p><b>Housing:</b> Student housing is available at the Canby and Granite Falls campuses, and private apartment arrangements are available at all campus and site locations. The college provides students with a listing of available rental housing.</p>
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	<div data-bbox="1068 226 1393 682" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><a href="#">Apply to this school</a></p> <p><a href="#">Request information</a></p> <p><a href="#">Back to campus map</a></p> <p><b>Web site:</b> <a href="http://www.mnwest.edu">www.mnwest.edu</a></p> <p><b>Mailing address:</b>  1314 N. Hiawatha Ave.  Pipestone, MN 56164</p> <p><b>Phone numbers:</b>  Admissions: (507) 825-6800  TTY: 1-800-627-3529  To arrange a campus visit: 1-800-658-2330, ext. 6811</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1068 714 1393 1165" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">  <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Get Directions</b></p> <p>Your ZIP code <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Go"/></p> </div> <p><b>Highlights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five southwest Minnesota campus locations: Canby, Granite Falls, Jackson, Pipestone and Worthington. Learning sites in Fairmont, Luverne and Marshall.</li> <li>• More than 60 majors in technical and liberal arts areas. Minnesota West Community and Technical College provides the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, designed to meet the first two years general education requirement at any Minnesota state college or university and many other fouryear colleges.</li> <li>• Accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.</li> <li>• One of the first Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to offer online degrees, diplomas and certificates accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.</li> <li>• Offers majors designed to meet emerging industry needs in renewable energy, biofuel and wind energy technology.</li> <li>• Recipient of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities 2008 Innovative Partnering and Collaboration Award for BioScience Partnership and the Excellence in Curriculum Programming Award for the Minnesota Energy Enterprise Center.</li> <li>• Radiologic, surgical, medical laboratory technology and medical assistant programs now available from the Luverne Educational Center for Health Careers.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">Last updated: 10/08</p>												

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	<p><b>BUSINESS &amp; INDUSTRY SERVICES</b></p>	
<p><b>Information For</b></p> <p>Students</p> <p>Business &amp; Industry</p> <p>News &amp; Media</p> <p>System Employees</p>	<p><b>Customized Training Services</b></p> <p>Companies of all sizes in every region of the state depend on the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System to prepare and maintain a qualified workforce, increase workplace productivity and support new business growth.</p>	
<p><b>System Information</b></p> <p>About the System</p> <p>Board of Trustees</p> <p>Centers of Excellence</p> <p>Chancellor's Office</p> <p>System Foundation</p> <p>System Gateway</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Search for customized training near you</b>                      Customized Training and Continuing Education Centers are located all over the state. Find one conveniently located for you.</p> </div>	
		
	<p>The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System offers employee training in a broad range of areas designed to meet common business challenges. For some employer needs, a standard training package works best. More often, however, our colleges and universities customize or create new training tailored to an employer's workforce, timeline, industry, or business plan. Training is delivered on-site, on campus, or online. The following are examples of training provided to employers:</p>	
<p><b>Sample Training Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aviation</li> <li>● Building trades</li> <li>● Business ethics</li> <li>● Culinary arts</li> <li>● Environmental safety compliance</li> <li>● Computer networking</li> <li>● Computer programming</li> <li>● Customer service</li> <li>● Computer software applications</li> <li>● E-commerce</li> <li>● Fire/emergency rescue</li> <li>● Internet web design</li> <li>● Intercultural communications</li> <li>● ISO certification</li> <li>● Leadership</li> <li>● Health care certification</li> <li>● Manufacturing technology</li> <li>● Occupational English</li> <li>● Quality assessment and management</li> <li>● Supervisory skills</li> <li>● Team building</li> <li>● Telecommunications</li> <li>● World languages</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Put the power of 32 colleges and universities to work for you!</b></p>		
		<p>Business Guide</p> <p>Centers of Excellence</p> <p>Customized Training</p> <p>Dislocated Workers</p> <p>Employers Served</p> <p>Online Corporate Services</p> <p>Search for Training</p> <p>Submit Job Opportunity</p> <p>Training Grants</p> <p>Workforce Education</p> <p>Business Home</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Find <i>customized training</i> solutions near you</b></p> <p>For more information, visit a specific college or university's customized training center, call the system-wide toll-free hotline at 1-800-366-7380, or e-mail business services.</p>



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## Youth

### Youth Development

The **Center for Youth Development** bridges research and practice and serves as a resource, catalyst, and advocate for quality community opportunities for young people to learn, lead, and contribute. We provide non-formal learning opportunities.



#### Youth Development Programs

**[Applied Research & Evaluation](#)**

Sharing out-of-school time research with policy makers, stakeholders, program leaders, decision makers and researchers

**[Minnesota 4-H Youth Development](#)**

Providing opportunities for kids to demonstrate leadership that benefits their communities and reflects the principles of democracy

**[Youth Work Institute](#)**

Supporting the education, training, and professional development of adults who work with and on behalf of young people

#### Feature



**[Youth Engagement Symposium Series](#)**

[What is it?](#) What does the research say? What are its benefits? How do you do it well? Why is it important? Three events, free to the public.

### Contact Information

[Center for 4-H Youth Development Staff Directory](#)

### Related

#### Related Websites

- [MN 4-H Foundation](#)
- [Minnesota 4-H Youth Development](#)
- [Children, Youth & Families Consortium](#)
- [CYFERnet](#)
- [National 4-H Council](#)

#### In the News

- [SOURCE: Discovering by doing](#)
- [National 4-H Hall of Fame inducts Minnesotan, Reed-Boniface](#)
- ['Walk into' new ways of thinking about youth leadership](#)

### Related Resources

**Find materials on these topics:**

- [Art & Photography](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [Child Care](#)
- [Child Development](#)
- [Families & Communities](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Pets](#)
- [Recreation & Hobbies, Youth](#)
- [School, Work & Families](#)
- [Understanding Youth](#)

### Work for us

[Employment Opportunities in Extension's Youth Development programs.](#)



Promoting the Arts since 1974

# SMAHC

## Southwest Minnesota Arts & Humanities Council

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The Southwest Minnesota Arts and Humanities Council seeks to encourage the growth and development of the arts and humanities in southwestern Minnesota by serving as a source of funds and technical services which enable local organizations, educational institutions and individuals to sponsor and/or create and promote the arts and humanities in their communities.

### Serving 18 counties in SW Minnesota

Big Stone \* Chippewa \* Cottonwood \* Jackson \* Kandiyohi \* Lac qui Parle \*  
Lincoln \* Lyon \* McLeod \* Meeker \* Murray \* Nobles \* Pipestone \* Redwood \*  
Renville \* Rock \* Swift & Yellow Medicine

## Celebrate Art & Celebrate Artists

SMAHC's Annual Celebration was held November 1st

[See pictures of the event here.](#)

## SMAHC IS LOOKING FOR GRANT PANELISTS

If you are interest in serving  
on a grant panel,

[CLICK HERE for more information](#)

## Artists Count: An Economic Impact Study of Artists in Minnesota, 2007

Read about the findings in this study for the SMAHC Region [HERE](#) (Acrobat  
Reader file - 439K)

**Grant Guidelines and Applications for 2008-2009 are posted on the website.  
Click on the links below to download forms. New forms for the fiscal year  
2009 will be posted in June.**

### Deadlines for 2008-2009

#### [Organizational Grants](#)

Deadlines:

August 1, 2008

February 2, 2009

#### [Artist Grants](#)

Individual Artist Development & Career Grant Deadline:

**December 1, 2008**  
**Artist Study Opportunity Deadlines:**  
**October 1, 2008**  
**April 1, 2009**

**[School Grants](#)**

**Deadlines:**  
**October 1, 2008**  
**April 1, 2009**

**[Educator Grants](#)**

**Deadline:**  
**To Be Determined**

**[Other Forms & Information](#)**

For Board and Grant Panelists: Site Evaluation form  
For Grant Panelists: Grant Panel Responsibilities  
For Grant Panelists: Application for Grant Review Panelist  
For Board Members: Application for SMAHC Board Members

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**Voices is the SMAHC bi-monthly newsletter. Each issue is posted on our web site.**  
***You can receive Voices by email. Click on the link below for more information.***

**[VOICES](#)**

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**[SMAHC GRANTS AWARDED FOR FISCAL YEAR 2006 - 2008](#)**

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**Have a comment or question**  
**[CLICK HERE](#)**

**Or Contact Us At:**  
Southwest Minnesota Arts & Humanities Council  
1210 East College Drive, Suite 600  
Marshall, Minnesota 56258  
800-622-5284 or 507-537-1471  
**[smahcinfo@iw.net](mailto:smahcinfo@iw.net)**



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## Customer Service Education

### At Your Service: Working with multicultural customers.

*At Your Service* is a training curriculum that builds customer service knowledge and skills. Extension can help Minnesota's community businesses, governments, organizations, and even healthcare facilities serve our increasingly diverse customers. [About the program...](#)



[Printable Info Sheet \(PDF\)](#)

WEBSITE

[At Your Service: Working With Multicultural Customers](#)

### Educational Offerings

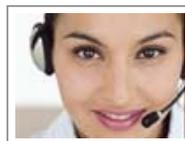
We offer these [educational opportunities](#) in Minnesota.

**Workshops** — Local half-day training sessions for service providers.

**Community Initiative** — A year-long partnership with the Extension training a team of local instructors to deliver workshops for service providers and business and community leaders.

**Train-the-Trainer Curriculum** — Purchase the complete At Your Service curriculum and develop your own customer service training program.

### Features



**A Su Servicio**

[Curriculum now available in Spanish!](#) Content has been translated and culturally adapted to meet the training needs of your Spanish speaking staff.

### Contact Information

**Cynthia Messer**  
Extension Educator-Tourism  
Tourism Center  
120 Bio Ag Engineering Building

**Program Team**  
[Find a Community Economics Regional Educator near you.](#)

### Related

#### Success Stories

**Satisfied Customers** —

[What our learners are saying...](#)

#### Also Recommended

[Building Awareness of Culture & Resources](#)

#### Related Websites

[Tourism Center](#)

#### Related Programs

- [Access E.info](#)
- [Business Retention & Expansion Strategies](#)
- [Certificate in Festival & Event Management](#)
- [Public Finance](#)
- [Retail Analysis and Development](#)

#### In the News

- [Earn a certificate from U of MN Tourism Center](#)
- [Minnesota residents see tourism as important to state's economy](#)

#### Community Vitality

[Horizons initiative to help rural MN](#)

#### Related Resources

**Materials on these topics**

[Diversity and Inclusion](#)

1390 Eckles Ave.  
St Paul, MN 55108  
Phone: 612-624-6236  
Fax: 612-624-4264  
Email: [cmesser@umn.edu](mailto:cmesser@umn.edu)

[Economic & Community  
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## Chapter VII: Implementation Plan

# Action Plan

*NOTE: This format can be helpful in writing down all the "parts" to making a STRATEGY work! It can be painful to take the time to fill it all in, but is a good "record" of the work and can aid in smoother transitions should the "people responsible" in an organization change.*

STRATEGY:								
RECORDER:								
#	Task / Activity	Who's Responsible?	By When?	% Progress (Est.)				Additional Notes
	Meet again as a group			25	50	75	100	
				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
				25	50	75	100	
				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
				25	50	75	100	
				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
				25	50	75	100	
				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
				25	50	75	100	
				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
				25	50	75	100	
				<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

What related activities are underway?	Is the project reaching all firms?	Do we want to partner with this project?



