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President's Message

2011 was a year filled with the challenges of an uncertain economy, which created many financial hurdles for companies and individuals alike. Yet the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation (EDC), by focusing on nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit, assisted multiple individuals and companies through various transitions. Hence, the theme for this report is *Expanding Horizons*.

In 2011, the EDC has worked to bring cutting-edge ideas to our area in order to create opportunities to expand economic prosperity for individuals and companies. The organization has been involved in creating groundbreaking new programs that will set the stage for many success stories to come.

The EDC played an instrumental role in leading one of the most significant accomplishments for our region - the creation of the Innovation Foundation of Western Wisconsin (IFWW). This new organization is comprised of some of the most accomplished business minds in western Wisconsin and the Twin Cities metro area. Its focus is to support entrepreneurs and innovation-based companies in advancing high-potential product ideas to market. The Otto Bremer Foundation gave IFWW a huge jump-start in the form of an almost \$200,000 grant.

With the teamwork of several key partners, the EDC was able to lead the creation of the new Near Equity Fund. This unique funding tool will assist start-up companies during the infancy stage of their businesses. The EDC conducted an analysis to identify where funding gaps exist for area companies. This fund was created to address these gaps. Today, the Near Equity Fund has reached \$1.2 million and will be one of the critical tools available to "expand horizons" for area companies.



Jason Plante
2011 EDC Board President

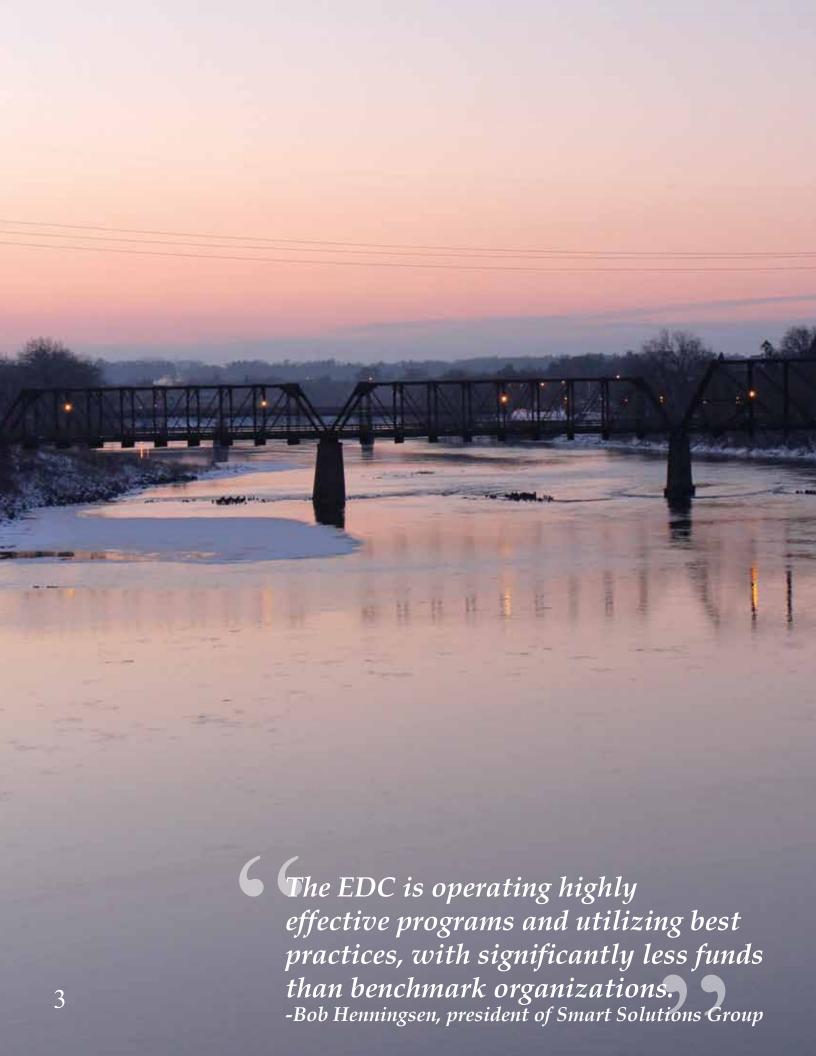
Also in 2011, the EDC board and staff worked with external consultants to evaluate the systems and processes of the organization. Through careful reflection and planning, we have adopted a new mission statement for the organization and have developed a strategy for the next three years. We believe that the EDC has set the stage with great work to this point and is poised to make even greater contributions to our area's economy moving forward.

I am excited to see how the EDC continues to expand horizons in 2012 and beyond. In fact, each of us can play a role in contributing to our area's economy by following one simple philosophy: *Take time, when possible, to utilize local firms*. Our region is blessed with high quality, hard-working companies and, by supporting fellow local businesses, we can all help each other through this rather difficult time.

Sincerely,

Jason Plante 2011 EDC Board President

Jason Plante



About the Corporation

Charting the Course for the Next 3 Years

In the first half of 2011, the EDC commissioned an external review of the corporation's operations, programs, marketing and business development efforts. The findings of this review noted that the EDC is operating highly effective programs and utilizing best practices, with significantly less funds than benchmark organizations. The review also outlined two areas of opportunity, which will be areas of focus for 2012-2014:

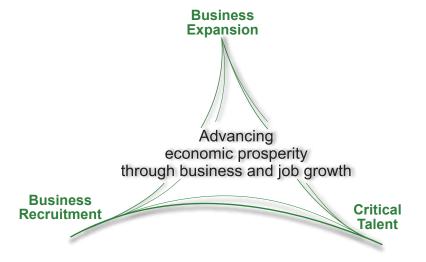
- Formalize a process to communicate activities and results to stakeholders
- Increase funding to sustain existing programs and activities and support strategic service expansion

The EDC board of directors, in collaboration with EDC staff, used the findings of the review along with insight about the needs of the local economy to craft a strategic plan for the EDC's next 3 years (2012 – 2014). Key aspects of this plan include:

- A new mission statement incorporating business growth
- Enhanced programming efforts
- Redefined organizational measurements

This focused approach will ensure the EDC maximizes the impact of each dollar invested to most effectively serve the area economy.

New Mission Statement



Our Philosophy

Unique assets are the foundation of our economy. Our focus is to continue to create and market these unique resources so that our area does not compete on commodities such as land and basic infrastructure.

Our Services

- Business Retention & Expansion Assistance
- Business Recruitment
- Financial Packaging & Loans
- Early-Stage Business Formation
- Research & Publish Market Statistics

2011 Annual Measurements

Jobs: 132 created

Private Sector Investment: \$7,520,000

Public Sector Investment: \$774,000

Idea Challenge Submissions: 73

Business Retention Visits: 47

Business Recruitment Visits: 31



New Initiatives in 2011

The Idea Challenge: Think New, Different, Better.



The Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is committed to fueling growth of the local economy by finding new and better

ways to support local entrepreneurs. As such, over the past year, the EDC has restructured and rebranded The Idea Challenge, a key program for entrepreneurs.

The Idea Challenge is an ongoing contest for individuals and companies with an idea for a new product or service in the Eau Claire area. This contest has offered business guidance to those who apply since its inception in 2007. This year, the program also offered monetary awards to high-potential ideas, thanks to a generous contribution by Northwestern Bank, The Idea Challenge 2011 sponsor.

In 2011, the EDC received 73 applications and awarded over \$10,000 to local individuals and companies to help advance new product ideas to the market.

"Northwestern Bank is proud to be a sponsor of a program that fosters economic development in the Chippewa Valley," said Gerald Jacobson, president of Northwestern Bank. "Most of the bank's business customers started out as a person with an idea. Through hard work, these

customers grow their ideas into businesses that provide jobs for our community.

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2011 Finalists of The Idea Challenge, from left: Gordon and Allen Steinhauer, Villager Stow n Tow; Kevin Rosenberg, Adhesive R&D; Alexis and Jim Lucas, Chip Magnet; Greg Krueger, FlameMeister; Alex Ecker and Jeremiah Isaacson, PictureMe

\$500 - 5 awards - cash

\$1,000 - 3 awards - reimbursable towards business expenses \$5,000 grand prize - reimbursable towards business expenses

The Idea Challenge is an important step to allow the process to start, since one of the main obstacles to grow an idea into a working company is lack of funds."

The top five 2011 applicants were invited to present their product and service ideas to a panel of local business professionals on December 5th, 2011.

Universe.



Rubber Max, submitted by Kevin Rosenberg, president of Adhesive R&D, was selected as The Idea Challenge 2011 Grand Prize Winner. Rosenberg received a \$5,000 check, reimbursable towards business expenses.

The Finalists:

Rubber Max (\$5,000 Grand Prize Winner / \$500 Prize) is a rubber anaerobic gasketing material developed by Adhesive R&D. Adhesive R&D researches and manufactures high performance industrial strength anaerobic and structural adhesives. Rubber Max addresses a problem with thermal expansion and contraction, improving upon current gasket technology.

"Programs such as the Idea Challenge offer entrepreneurs not only financial benefits, but also affords an opportunity to learn from seasoned business professionals, and gain

insight into available local resources," stated Rosenberg.

PictureMe Universe (\$1000 Technical Assistance, \$500 Cash) is a mobile smartphone and web application created by Jeremiah Isaacson and Alex Ecker, two UW-Eau

"It's a great feeling to see that your idea is taken seriously, and that there are people dedicated to making your idea succeed"

Claire students. They are working together with Sarah Lynn of Sarah Lynn Design, who is an alumnus of UW-Eau Claire, to create the PictureMe Universe interface designs.

Isaacson says the idea came to him while he was in Europe with the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire's GlobITPro grant program. During his summer nights he began developing mobile applications as a hobby. After success and failure of some of his projects, Isaacson began thinking of solutions to real-world problems during his weekend trips.

"It's a great feeling to see that your idea is taken seriously, and that there are people dedicated to making your idea succeed," said Isaacson in a post-presentation interview.



The Idea Challenge Grand Prize Winner Rubber Max



FlameMeister (\$1000 Technical Assistance, \$500 Cash) is a combustion air modulator for HVAC systems developed by Greg Krueger, founder and owner of GK Products. The FlameMeister prevents combustion air loss on gas appliances with blocked air intake pipes by modulating outdoor and indoor air sources. Krueger said the idea for FlameMeister came about as a result of his twenty years as a heating contractor. He consistently serviced homeowners with gas heating appliances that had stopped functioning because of blocked air intake pipes.

The Villager Stow n Tow (\$1000 Technical Assistance, \$500 Cash) is a stowable trailer and front carrier designed for use with golf carts. The idea was submitted by two brothers, Allen and Gordon Steinhauer. The Steinhauer's idea allows for golf cart users to carry oversized or irregular objects, such as garbage cans or coolers. When not in use, the device conveniently folds upwards onto the back of the golf cart.

Chip Magnet (\$500 Cash) submitted by Alexis Lucas, is an idea to bring her homemade salsas, jellies and relishes to market. The products are made in small batches using local, organic and genetically modified organism-free (GMO-free) ingredients. Chip Magnet

has already been available at several local farmers' markets.

"It was a pretty big learning experience for us, some of the things that we hadn't thought of, some of the things we had thought of that [the EDC] expanded on have really helped us to grow in a short amount of time," said Jim Lucas, Alexis' husband and business partner.

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The IFWW Takes Hold



The Innovation Foundation of Western Wisconsin (IFWW), loosely formed in 2010, made great strides towards becoming a true asset to

the region in 2011. This year, the IFWW gained a formal structure, logo, branding and a virtual presence at www.ifww.org. The EDC has been a driving force in the creation of this new organization that has an independent board and will operate as an on-going partner in serving business needs throughout the region. The EDC is contracted to provide organizational services to the IFWW.

The IFWW works with new and existing innovation-based companies to identify gaps in resources that may cause roadblocks in bringing product ideas to market.

The IFWW works with new and existing innovation-based companies to identify gaps in resources that may cause roadblocks in bringing product ideas to market. By providing resources vital to the success of

emerging businesses, the IFWW will play a role in creating a prosperous future for western Wisconsin.

In July 2011, the IFWW was awarded a grant from the Otto Bremer Foundation in the amount of \$192,500. A portion of this grant has been used to hire an executive director. The remaining balance is to be utilized to create innovation funds supporting technical assistance needed by companies during the product research and development stage. The funds will be available for individuals and businesses located in Dunn, Pierce, St. Croix and Polk Counties.

2011 Marketing Efforts

The EDC's 2011 marketing campaigns utilized a combination of email, direct mail and customized website landing pages to open conversations with our target markets about key resources in the Eau Claire Area. The target industries for our 3 primary campaigns included: high-tech executives and site selectors, U.S. companies with supply chain operations in Japan, modular data centers as well as finance, insurance and real estate.



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\$1.2 Million Near Equity Fund Launched

In early December 2011, the EDC in partnership with area financial institutions, Xcel Energy and the Chippewa Valley Innovation Center finalized the creation of a \$1.2 million Near Equity Fund to provide financing to emerging companies looking to locate in the Eau Claire area.

The purpose of this fund is to assist companies that are scaling from a start-up or early stage to an established organization. During this emerging growth stage, revenues are often not sufficient to support cash flow needs. This program is designed to provide companies with liquidity needed to become strong, local businesses.

To make this fund possible, the EDC formed a collaboration of eight local organizations. Each of these partners are making \$150,000 available to the fund:

- Eau Claire Area EDC Loan Fund
- Royal Credit Union
- Charter Bank
- Xcel Energy
- Chippewa Valley Innovation Center Loan Fund
- Northwestern Bank
- United Bank
- Citizens Community Federal

"As one of the group of financial institutions that chose to participate in this program to grow the regional economy, we

The purpose of this fund is to assist companies that are scaling from a start-up or early stage to an established organization.

are excited about the opportunity this fund provides to support new and growing, innovative companies," stated Trevor Bohland,

Chair of the Near Equity Loan Committee and Senior Vice President of United Bank in Eau Claire. "The Near Equity Fund allows us to participate in providing financing to these companies, which may not have access to traditional small business loans in today's current banking environment."

The fund is modeled after the Madison Development Corporation's Venture Debt Fund, which has a proven track record in Dane County, providing over \$5 million in financing for emerging growth companies.

To be eligible for a loan from this fund, businesses must operate within the City of Eau Claire or Eau Claire County. Loans can range from \$100,000 to \$250,000 with an interest rate ranging from prime +2% to prime +4%.



Project Highlights

Global Finishing Solutions Expansion

The EDC worked with Global Finishing Solutions (GFS) on an expansion at the company's corporate headquarters in Osseo, WI. The consolidation project involved relocating manufacturing capacity from a facility in Mexico and sales positions from Texas to Osseo. The project will create 111 new jobs at the company headquarters, which prior to the expansion employed nearly 300 workers. The EDC provided technical services including structuring financial options and drafting applications. Without these services, GFS would not have expanded within Wisconsin.

Though Osseo is not located in Eau Claire County, the EDC executive committee recognized that GFS provides southern Eau Claire County's residents with quality employment opportunities, as over 35% of the employees at the GFS headquarters reside in Eau Claire County. The EDC facilitates private sector projects that will provide employment opportunities to residents throughout Eau Claire county, if a surrounding county does not have an economic development organization.



RBF Loan Summary

The EDC helped several companies in Eau Claire County gain financing from Regional Business Fund, Inc. RBF, is a \$17 million dollar loan pool to help grow companies

in west central Wisconsin by offering loans to create jobs, add new technology, make capital investments or improve downtown building exteriors.

| Company | Dollars Received | Project Summary | Impact on Jobs |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--|----------------|
| Silvermine Stone Company | \$120,000 | Build inventoryUpdate equipmentObtain a line of credit for working capital needs | 12 jobs |
| Pro Poly of America, Inc | \$29,000 | • Business expansion | 8 jobs |
| Benjamin and Louise Hinz | \$25,000 | Working capitalBuild inventory | 1 job |



2011 Dove Healthcare CEO Jim Deignan And Staff.

2011 Paragon Economic Impact Award Winner: Dove Healthcare and Affiliates



Each year, the Paragon Award is given to a local business that demonstrates excellence and positive economic impact in the Eau Claire area. In 2011, Dove Healthcare received this award in recognition of the company's continued contributions to the area economy.

Through recent expansion projects, Dove Healthcare has created 140 new jobs in the Eau Claire area. These expansion projects include the addition of 13 private rooms in 2008 to the Orchard Hills Assisted Living facility, followed by an energy upgrade to the Wissota Health and Regional Vent Center. In late 2010, the company added 15 private rooms in its memory care unit at Rutledge Home Assisted Living and Memory Care facility. In 2009 Dove Healthcare-South opened, a 50-bed Medicare certified skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility providing both short and long-term care.

"On behalf of our organization's owner, Tommy Davidson, and our facilities' leadership teams, I am honored to accept this

Through recent expansion projects, Dove Healthcare has created 140 new jobs in the Eau Claire area.

year's Paragon Award from the Eau Claire Area EDC," said Jim Deignan, CEO for Dove Healthcare and Affiliates. "Nearly 15 years ago, Tommy Davidson and I began planning for Dove Healthcare's beginnings. Our goals today remain focused on what they did then...to do what we do best, and do it as much as we can. Through unselfish ownership principles, we have grown, and while growing we have continued to earn the community's trust, never forgetting where we came from."

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Committee Structure

Business Expansion

Assist in creation, financing and expansion of emerging and existing businesses.

Business Recruitment

Develop and implement marketing strategies to attract new business and industry.

Critical Talent

Aligning workforce related systems to develop and retain talent that drives leading-edge and early-stage companies.

Investor Relations & Financial Sustainability

Research, develop and implement strategies that will provide funding solutions to sustain current and emerging economic development services.

Financial Report

| Revenue | 2011 Actual | 2011 Budget |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| City of Eau Claire | \$90,000 | \$90,000 |
| Eau Claire County | \$88,000 | \$88,000 |
| City of Altoona | \$5,000 | \$5,000 |
| City of Augusta | \$4,000 | \$4,000 |
| Town of Fairchild | \$100 | \$100 |
| Town of Pleasant Valley | \$300 | \$0 |
| Village of Fall Creek | \$5,000 | \$5,000 |
| Village of Fairchild | \$500 | \$100 |
| Private Sector Investment | \$97,799 | \$92,000 |
| Interest | \$1,788 | \$2,615 |
| Vacant Building Fund/Grants | \$7,990 | \$0 |
| SMARTT Network | \$750 | \$4,500 |
| Sponsorships | \$8,900 | \$10,000 |
| Administrative Contracts | \$7,263.00 | \$0 |
| Total Revenue | \$317,390 | \$301,315 |

| Expenses | 2011 Actual | 2011 Budget |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Administrative | \$205,676 | \$195,250 |
| Operations | \$54,135 | \$51,095 |
| Programs | \$52,334 | \$52,970 |
| Capital - Equipment | \$3,844 | \$2,000 |
| Total Expenses | \$315,989 | \$301,315 |



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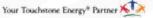
















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