

Building a
Stronger
Northwoods
Economy



A Message from the Board Chairman



It is a great privilege to be able to lead the Vilas County Economic Development Corporation (VCEDC). We have a strong, diverse, volunteer working board whose members contribute their time, skills, experience, and funding to ensure that the VCEDC will help enhance the economy and quality of life in the Northwoods.

In partnership with the county, our townships, Nicolet College, the Lac du Flambeau Tribe and area business leaders, we offer a broad range of services and support for new and existing businesses and entrepreneurs.

As a result of the growth of high-speed internet throughout the county, which we have supported, it is now not only possible, but practical to live in the beautiful Northwoods and conduct business worldwide. We're proud to see growth in the creation of new quality jobs and career opportunities in Vilas County.

Given the opportunity that the internet provides us, a priority for 2020 is significantly increased outreach to entrepreneurs, business owners, and remote workers outside of Vilas County to increase awareness that if one loves the Northwoods, they can live and work here full time, and not just vacation here or venture north for long weekends.

We need your help to continue the economic development momentum that we're seeing. We ask individuals and businesses to join us to not only better develop a network of proactive business leaders who can benefit from improved collaboration, but as a non-profit 501(c)(3), also in contributing financial support to the VCEDC. We see more opportunities to support economic growth than we have the resources to address and we recognize that we must grow more private financial support to achieve our vision for Vilas County.

“We need your help to continue the economic development momentum that we're seeing.”

The goal for our 2020 fundraising campaign is \$150,000. These funds will help us provide more resources to help businesses succeed, and also help us improve our outreach to entrepreneurs and business owners outside of the Northwoods to promote the advantages of working and living in Vilas County.

Please join us to ensure a strong business and economic environment in Vilas County, enabling current and future generations to benefit from our exceptional Wisconsin Northwoods.

Thank You!

Jim Tuckwell

VCEDC BOARD CHAIRMAN

A Message from the Executive Director

Since I began my role I have had the distinct pleasure of meeting and advising business owners, accepting invitations for speaking engagements, attending chamber of commerce dinners and networking socials, presenting at Vilas County board and committee meetings, and simply, participating in many activities in this amazing county and enjoying all it has to offer.

As I reflect back on my first few months of service, serving this great organization and working alongside a stellar board of directors, it has truly solidified my decision to move my family to the great Northwoods. Now with high-speed internet and the resort lifestyle of the Northwoods, it is possible to have the best of both worlds. I exchanged a 45-minute commute on the Milwaukee freeways to traveling down country highways with majestic eagles flying over my car. If I knew then what I know now, I would have relocated sooner. With that insight, I encourage remote workers, entrepreneurs and businesses seeking to expand to consider and act upon doing the same. As a premier tourist destination, people spend thousands of dollars to come here for a week or weekend. Mindsets are changing to 'I should look into living here year-round.'

The passion that I have experienced from the business community to succeed is truly remarkable. I am proud of

“It truly is possible to have the best of both worlds.”

our role at the VCEDC to support current business, attract new business, entrepreneurs and remote workers – all to support their dreams to thrive with a work/life balance in the beautiful Vilas County Northwoods.

It truly is possible to have the best of both worlds.

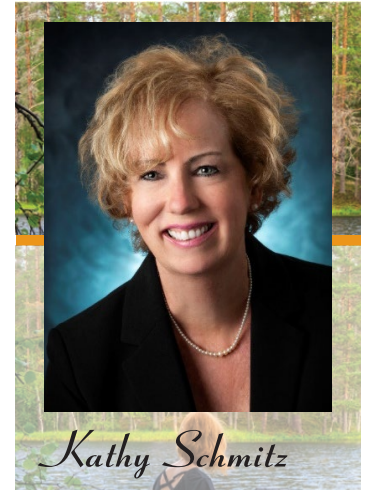
Thank you again

for the very kind welcome!

I look forward to meeting and working with more of you in the months and years ahead! If we can ever be of service to you please feel free to contact me.

Kathy Schmitz

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



On January 1, 2020, I was honored to start my first day as Executive Director of the Vilas County Economic Development Corporation. I want to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to each of you for such a warm welcome.

Vilas County Economic Development Corporation



Marsha McVicker
CEO, ERRAND SOLUTIONS

“ We have great employees in Land O’ Lakes, lower overall costs, and faster internet service than I have in my offices in Downtown Chicago!”

Realize your
business potential
in the Northwoods



Fostering the Entrepreneurial Spirit

From concept to company, the Vilas County Economic Development Corporation is here to help you bring your company to life and achieve your goals. This includes financial assistance, business plans, marketing, networking, consulting, events, and more... **all at no charge.**

- **Nicolet College Entrepreneur Classes**

Vilas County residents qualify for fully paid-for scholarships through the Juday Foundation.

- **Access to Funding Sources**

The VCEDC can support your venture through our connections with a wide array of available capital.

- **Strong Support Network**

Our expansive list of mentors is here to guide you through the entrepreneurial journey.

Our Priorities: We Support Entrepreneurs, Business and Remote Workers.

Imagine your new
morning commute



Business Expansion

Financing, Business Plans, Networking, Mentoring/Consulting, Succession Planning, and Overall Support for Your Business.

There Are Many Reasons Northern Wisconsin is the Place to Grow Your Business.

- **Lower Costs:** Operating costs are lower.
- **Quality Workforce:** The Northwoods offers a skilled, energized workforce.
- **High Speed Internet:** Connect to the world from the Northwoods.

Supporting Remote Workers

With nature to inspire and relax, Vilas County is paradise for remote workers who love the outdoors and all four seasons.

There Are Many Reasons Northern Wisconsin is the Place to Work Remotely:

- **Low Housing Costs & Taxes** For the same cost of a condo in the city, you can get your dream home on a lake.
- **High Speed Internet** Trade your cubicle in for lakeshore workspace.
- **Lifestyle** Replace your stressful commute for the beautiful Northwoods.

We Support Vilas County!



2019 Annual Meeting

The Vilas County Economic Development Corporation

held its 2019 Annual Meeting at the Lake of the Torches Resort Casino on Friday, December 6th. Participants included tribal members, county board members, township officials, state political representatives, area business leaders, representatives of Nicolet College, and donors.

The theme of the event highlighted key partners who work together with the VCEDC to better the economy in the Northwoods. Randy Soulier, COO of the Lac du Flambeau Business Development Corporation highlighted the significant contribution that the Lac du Flambeau tribe has on the region with a payroll of nearly 1,000 employees. Sam Rikkers, COO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation highlighted its focus and support for rural counties. Nicolet College President Richard Nelson, and Sandy Bishop, Nicolet College Executive Director for Economic Development, highlighted the Guiding Rural Innovation & Development (GRID) initiative as well as entrepreneurial training classes, both of which the VCEDC is heavily involved in. And, Wisconsin State Senator Tom Tiffany shared his perspectives on economic development in the Northwoods. Retiring board members and staff were recognized and Kathy Schmitz, the new VCEDC Executive Director shared her vision and excitement for the opportunities she sees in Vilas County.



Randy Soulier outlines the economic impact of the Lac du Flambeau Business Development Corporation at the VCEDC Annual Meeting on December 6, 2019.

It's been a busy, productive, and successful year and we're looking forward to 2020 and helping more area businesses and entrepreneurs succeed, and increasing our emphasis on attracting more entrepreneurs, remote workers and businesses to the Northwoods.

Highlights Partnerships



Bob Egan Retires and Joins Board of Directors

Bob Egan was recognized at the 2019 Annual Meeting and received a standing ovation for his commitment to Vilas County and his contribution to helping area entrepreneurs and businesses succeed.

Bob retired from his executive director role at year end, however we're very grateful that Bob joined the VCEDC board of directors effective January 1, 2020 and will continue to lead key initiatives such as the brownfield projects, Revolving Loan Fund and working with the Vilas County Fair Board.

Congratulations Bob, and THANK YOU!

With the retirement of Bob Egan, in December the VCEDC named Kathy Schmitz as its new Executive Director.

“Kathy comes to us from Milwaukee with a proven track record in growing and promoting non-profit organizations,” said Jim Tuckwell, Chairman of the VCEDC Board of Directors. “We’re very confident in Kathy’s leadership ability to advance our mission to stimulate economic growth in Vilas County. We have enjoyed many successes over our short history and are in a strong position to multiply them. Kathy has an exceptional background in marketing, communications and strategic planning and she will be a real driver in our effort.”



Kathy Schmitz Named New Executive Director

“I am honored to join the VCECD as Executive Director at this important time in its 11-year history,” said Schmitz. “As a result of the fast-paced expansion of internet throughout the County a person can now live and work in Wisconsin’s beautiful Northwoods, earn a Silicon Valley income and do business around the world. Vilas County, comprised of Eagle River, Arbor Vitae, Boulder Junction, Manitowish Waters, and so many other wonderful towns, truly is a Wisconsin treasure.”



L to R: Vilas County Supervisor Jay Verhulst, Retiring VCEDC Executive Director Bob Egan, Vilas County Board Chairman Ron DeBruyne, and Manitowish Waters Town Chairman John Hanson.



L to R: Ted Ritter, Carolyn Rittter, Vilas County Board Supervisor & VCEDC Board Member, VCEDC Board Chairman Jim Tuckwell.



Sam Rikkers, Deputy Secretary/COO at Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, speaks to guests regarding the future of economic development in Wisconsin.



VCEDC Board Chairman Jim Tuckwell extends gratitude to VCEDC board members for their years of service including Denise Jantzen for serving as Treasurer. Denise remains on the VCEDC Board of Directors.



State Senator Tom Tiffany, VCEDC New Executive Director Kathy Schmitz, Retiring VCEDC Executive Director Bob Egan, VCEDC Board Chairman Jim Tuckwell.

VCEDC Commitment to Internships

develops future workforce



L to R: Makayla Hayes and Anna Hayes.

The VCEDC, for the first time employed two student interns for the summer with the goal of gaining much needed help on specific projects, and also providing a growth and learning opportunity. We were fortunate to have Anna and Makayla Hayes join our team for the summer.

Each has graduated with honors from Northland Pines High School, and both are currently pursuing dual majors (math and statistics) at U.W. Madison.

They each juggled busy schedules with other summer jobs as well as volunteer work...

We were very pleased to gain the insight and support that Anna and Makayla had to offer during the summer months. They each juggled busy schedules with other summer jobs as well as volunteer work, with VCEDC projects and helped develop HUBZone application guidance and updated our newsletter e-mail distribution database.

A New Approach for Vilas County Incubator Offices

The Vilas County Economic Development Corporation provides innovative leadership and regional infrastructure to help:

- **Secure** the economic well-being of businesses, communities and residents
- **Lead** the creation and retention of viable businesses and quality jobs
- **Provide** increased opportunities for education and training strengthening workforce development

As the VCEDC has grown and evolved its services and support for area businesses, and based on feedback from the community, we see our mission as it involves helping provide businesses with operating space evolving from providing just incubator space, to helping businesses find the optimal working space based on their requirements.

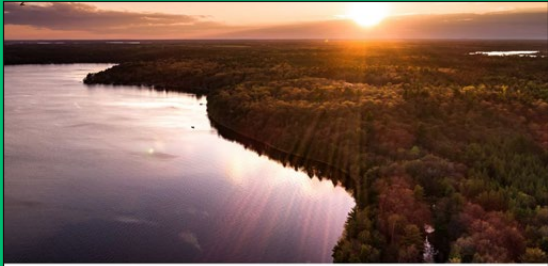
As a result, the Land O' Lakes, Manitowish Waters, and Phelps buildings are now overseen by a new nonprofit company, the Eye On Entrepreneurs (EOE) Network, independent of the VCEDC. The VCEDC continues to house our offices, and offer some office space in our Eagle River building, 555 Enterprise Way, Eagle River. We strive to help entrepreneurs, remote workers and businesses find the optimum operating environment to support their business plan. This might be a home office, EOE Network office space, the VCEDC business office, or other commercial property that the VCEDC can help identify.



Vilas County Revolving Loan Fund Launched

The oversight committee for the Vilas County Revolving Loan Fund was selected and the fund “launched” during the first quarter of 2019 which gives the VCEDC a new financing resource for area businesses. If you’re interested in applying, or would like to learn more please contact Kathy Schmitz at (715) 337-0061 or kathy@vilascountyedc.org.

Vilas County Featured in *Business in Focus* Magazine



Living and Working in **Two Worlds**

Written by Margaret Patricia Eaton

Imagine this scenario: After communicating with international clients, you take a break to stretch your legs and walk out to the water – and we are not talking about an office water cooler. We are envisioning crystal clear lake water, surrounded by pine forest where you take a soul-nourishing breath. Refreshed, you head back to your computer to continue developing a software program.

Totally fanciful? No, this could be your reality if you were living and working in Vilas County, Wisconsin.

Heavily forested Vilas County, in northeastern Wisconsin on the Michigan border, is blessed with water. Of its 874 square miles, 144 square miles of it is water. The lakes flow into the Deerskin, Manitowish, and Trout Rivers which, in turn, flow into Lake Superior on the north, the Chippewa River on the west, and the Wisconsin River on the east.

The area also contains the million-acre Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, making it a true paradise for kayaking and swimming, fishing, ice fishing, waterskiing, hiking, and bicycling, and ideal for ATV and snowmobile enthusiasts. In fact, the county seat of Eagle River is known as the snowmobile capital of the world, hosting worldwide snowmobile racing championships that attract between 15,000 and 20,000 spectators annually.

"Think of it as the Indy 500 of snowmobiling," says Vilas County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Chairman of the Board Jim Tuckwell.

With all this going for it, one might think that Vilas County's main business is tourism. While it is true that tourism is important in the region and can triple the year-round population of approximately 21,430 people, we learned that there is a whole lot more going on in Vilas County, where the face of economic

Visit our website at <https://www.vilascountyedc.org/> to download a copy.

“Living and Working in Two Worlds” is an article in FMG Publishing’s July 2019 Edition of **“Business in Focus”** magazine, a business publication reaching over 460,000 business people throughout North America. The article highlights how our growing broadband connectivity is bringing new career opportunities to Vilas County and Wisconsin’s Northwoods. Entrepreneurs can now enjoy the beauty, lower costs and quality of life available here, while conducting business on a global scale. The article does a great job of highlighting the benefits of building business in the Northwoods and we encourage you to check it out.



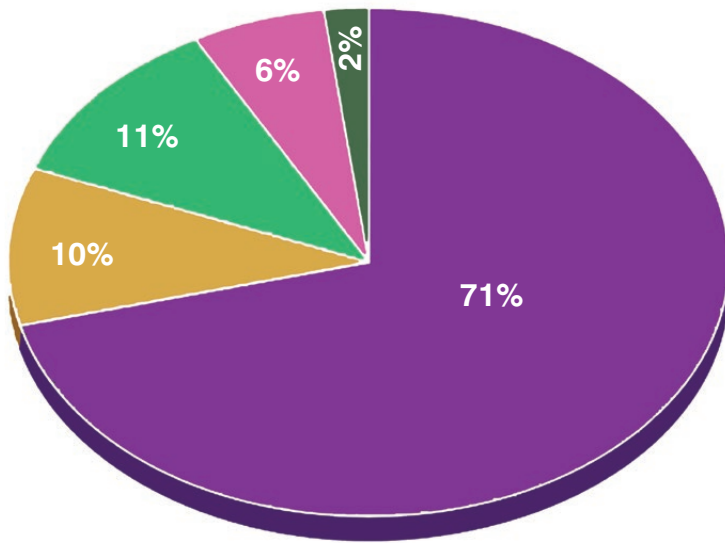
Conover to Phelps Bike Trailhead Project Moves Forward

The Town of Phelps has acquired part of the Christiansen Mill property that will be used as the trailhead for the Phelps end of the trail between Phelps and Conover. It will also be used as a parking area for the snowmobile and ATV trails in Phelps. Bob Egan, retiring VCEDC Executive Director, worked with the DNR and the Town of Phelps to obtain a letter of liability exclusion for the Town of Phelps which was a requirement, as this land was part of the mill’s brownfield property.



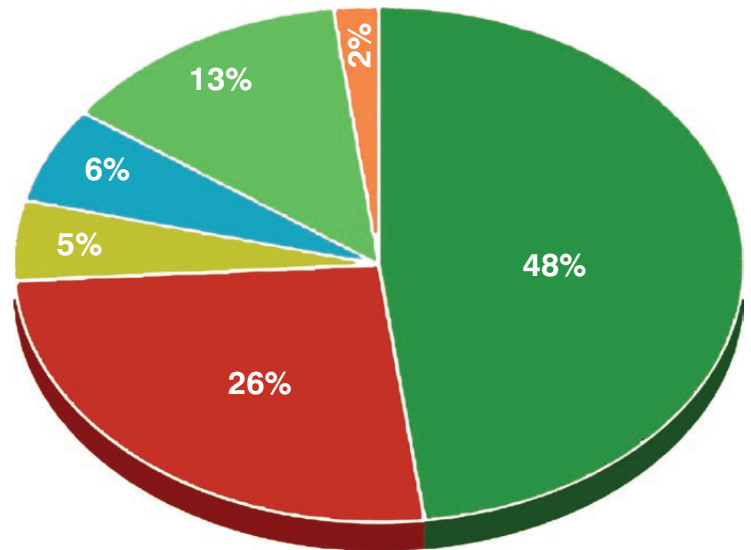
2019 Financials

Revenue Source



- Vilas County
- Townships
- Board and Businesses
- Other
- Rental Income

Category Expense Totals



- Program Delivery
- Future Projects
- Business Development
- Operations
- Communications/Marketing
- Other

Patty Krarup, Treasurer 03/05/2020



VCEDC *Leadership*

Staff

Kathy Schmitz, *Executive Director*

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

Jim Tuckwell, *Chairman*
Dave Juday, *Vice-Chairman*
Patty Krarup, *Treasurer*
April Leanna, *Secretary*

Directors

Brittany Allen
Emerson Coy
Bob Egan
Brad Gauthier
Elizabeth Gering

Denise Jantzen
Noah Lottig
Bill Niemuth
Carolyn Ritter
Carl Ruedebusch
Vern Wiggerhauser

Ex-Officio Members

Richard Nelson
Jim Rosenberg
Chris Stark

Professional Volunteer

Jeff Currie