



BUENA VISTA, CLAY, DICKINSON & EMMET COUNTIES

## Corridor releases new strategic plan

MILFORD – The Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation presented its strategic plan for 2013-2016 to its investors and partners and launched the campaign to fund the plan in its entirety. The Connect Collaborate Compete campaign – called C<sup>3</sup> - is an aggressive four-year, \$3.55 million plan that emphasizes the importance of dynamic connections and collaboration for our region to compete in today's changing economy. C<sup>3</sup> has four goals:

- Assure employers have access to an adequate, well-trained workforce.
- Provide an infrastructure conducive to business development.
- Create and maintain an environment for business development and job growth.
- Enhance entrepreneurial activity and new business starts.

The campaign is being led by four co-chairs from each of the four counties served by the Iowa Lakes Corridor: John Cotton of Clay County, Curt Johnson of Dickinson County, Pat Reno of Buena Vista County and Ron Smith of Emmet County. The co-chairs announced the Corridor has received pledges from 15 investors already that have committed more than \$1 million over the next four years.

“In this plan, the Iowa Lakes Corridor assumes an expanded role with a new area of emphasis and approach to address workforce shortages and skills gaps,” said Kathy Evert, president and CEO. “We are researching other regional models and will leverage and connect existing and new resources to ensure employers are able to hire and retain local skilled workers and help workers obtain the skills and support they need to successfully participate in a vibrant, local labor market.”



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*Campaign co-chair John Cotton of Cotton Grave Farm Management spoke about his reasons for supporting the Iowa Lakes Corridor. To the right are the other co-chairs, Pat Reno of Ranco Fertiliservice, Ron Smith, Emmet County Supervisor, and Curt Johnson of Bank Midwest. Behind Cotton is Bill Bumgarner, chairman of the Iowa Lakes Corridor's Board of Directors.*

During the presentation, five testimonials were given by Corridor clients: Brian Hines, Director of Operations at Polaris Industries; Don Van Oort, Chief Technology Officer at Thinix; Rob Hach, owner of Anemometry Specialists; Jill Fahnlander, Middle School Entrepreneurship Academy participant; Sandy Heerdt, Entrepreneurial Teacher Training participant.

The objective for workforce is assuring employers have access to an adequate, well-trained workforce. This will be done by funding collaborative to supplement employer efforts, creating an awareness campaign of employer workforce needs with area schools, multi-media partnerships with existing industry associations (NAM, construction trades, health care, etc.) promoting skilled/technical jobs and careers, a new marketing campaign (replacing Why Go Back?) to promote and connect the region to newcomers, creating a campaign to market businesses and available positions/training, and a regional initiative to address workforce housing shortage.

The main objective for housing and infrastructure is providing an infrastructure conducive to business development. This will be done by identifying the demand for housing across the ILCDC region by working with developers, housing groups, and funding sources to attract additional development, allowing better access to housing for workers; establishing a regional funding pool to support housing initiatives; advocating for key telecommunication and transportation needs; developing venues for residents to network and develop their leadership skills (e.g., Young Professionals groups, industry segment work groups, CEO/Owner/President Roundtables, volunteer opportunities through ILCDC and others).

The main objective for business development is creating an environment for business development and job growth. This will be done by launching a campaign to inform citizens of existing businesses, actively assisting, referring to appropriate assistance, or develop resources to address issues where resources are not available for existing business and industry, and market/promote region to high-impact businesses outside of the area that fit well with existing industry segments and supply chains.

The main objective for entrepreneurship is enhancing entrepreneurial activity and new business starts. This will be completed by growing both the Okoboji Entrepreneurial Institute and youth entrepreneurship programming, promoting entrepreneurship within secondary educational institutions, building on coaching, counseling, networking, and market research assistance for start-up, young and growth-potential companies, developing and implementing a campaign to educate stakeholders and entrepreneurs about available services (No Wrong Door), and championing and assisting in the redevelopment of properties suitable for entrepreneurial neighborhoods and locations for new entrepreneurs.

The Corridor closely tracks its progress on the current strategic plan. Results of the current plan as of June 30 include:

- Goal: 600 new primary jobs
  - Actual to date: 657; nearly 270 jobs retained
- Goal: Start 40 new companies
  - Actual to date: 22
- Goal: 200 Existing Industry visits and interviews
  - Actual to date: 189
- Goal: 16 Trade shows/Sell/Recruitment Trips
  - Actual to date: 14
- Goal: Raise \$2.5 million to fund the TARGET plan
  - Actual: \$2.65 million

The process for developing the plan began in February. Strategic planning materials were given to staff and board members. In March, the Corridor held a kick-off event with three key presentations; exit surveys were given after the event to determine how investors felt about different areas of economic development, and what role the Corridor should have in them. In April, the annual investor survey went out, and four focus group sessions were held. In May, a New Mover Study was completed.

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The Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation is the regional economic development agency for Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson and Emmet counties. Its mission is to foster, encourage, aid, promote or otherwise assist in the economic growth and development of the region. For more information about the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation, call 712-264-3474 or visit [www.lakescorridor.com](http://www.lakescorridor.com).