

Commerce



Commerce News

January 7, 2021



2020 in review

As we enter into the new year, Commerce would like to reflect on the achievements seen across the state.

2020 was a year that took us all by surprise. Despite new obstacles that many of us experienced, we were able to not only adapt, but rise as a

state. The year brought us challenges, but with challenges come opportunities.

The challenges we faced gave us the opportunity to build a stronger morale than ever by enhancing a sense of unity among state, federal, local communities, businesses and citizens.

To highlight 2020, we have decided to provide a special edition of our newsletter focusing on the year as a whole.

Our achievements over the past year not only reflect our team, which is committed to serving our residents and businesses, but everyone who showed what it means to **BeNDLegendary**.



Commerce



COVID-19 response and business support

Commerce led Commerce Business Briefings in partnership with the Greater North Dakota Chamber as a method to provide real-time updates on federal, state and local funding opportunities for businesses and communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. On average, more than 1,000 individuals joined each call to hear updates from a variety of community, state and federal leaders. Commerce also led efforts on ND Smart Restart protocols for businesses.

Commerce also developed and implemented three grant opportunities to assist businesses: The Economic Resiliency Grant Program (ERG), Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant Program (HERG) and the Hospitality Economic Resiliency Grant PLUS.

- **For the three grants, Commerce received 4,007 applications and made 3,224 awards totaling \$60,322,583.**

The Tourism and Marketing Division launched the first-ever in-state marketing and fully funded cooperative campaigns to support businesses and communities that lost in excess of \$1 billion in visitor spending during 2020. The division also hosted weekly/monthly tourism chats providing insights on industry data and trends.

Main Street



Results from comprehensive surveying of businesses and communities in the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic provided guidance to local and state leadership. These surveys provided direction for the governor's ND Smart Restart protocols, multiple web-based training for businesses and community leaders and regular communication to Main Street Leaders network.

The [Economic Development Ecosystem Map](#) was created to provide a spatial representation of entities that do economic development work in North Dakota at local, regional and state levels.

The MSI team also reenergized the Rural Development Council. The team used results from the Rural ED survey to set priorities for long-term rural economic and community growth, including stabilizing rural development funding, investment in infrastructure, quality of life and high-paying jobs and building leadership capacity.

The Main Street Partners in Planning grant was implemented and Commerce awarded \$125,000 to nine communities to create comprehensive plans, economic diversity plans or COVID-19 response plans.

Vibrancy grants also were implemented to incentivize small successes in communities that empower the community and develop confidence in local leaders to strive for more. These grants also support the implementation of a community need project identified and supported by a comprehensive or economic development plan whose creation was incentivized by Partners in Planning grants – effectively operationalizing the plan and ensuring it doesn't get placed on a shelf.

ED&F



The Economic Development and Finance Division transformed how economic development is conducted in the state through new concierge approach doubling primary sector throughput when compared to previous biennia.

The team worked in excess of \$2 billion in projects in 2020.

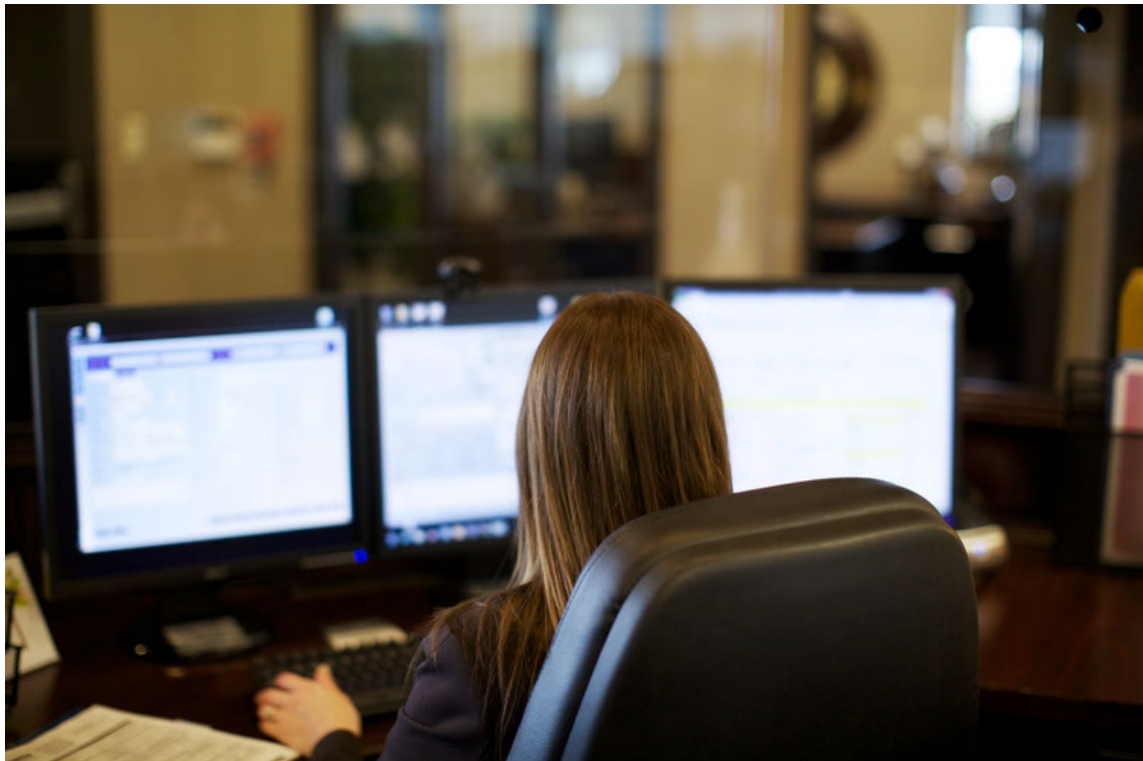
More than \$50 million was used in start-up innovation activity using The Innovation Technology Loan Fund (LIFT) and InnovateND as side-by-side tools to attract equity.

After 20 years of attempts with no state money, ED&F and several partners successfully recruited intermodal operation to North Dakota!

Overall, North Dakota has invested more than \$44 million to advance UAS research and development and is collaborating with organizations statewide to build this emerging industry. Commerce recruited 15 new UAS companies in the last 18 months with a 15% year-over-year industry

growth. Within its borders, North Dakota already has all the components needed to support UAS education, training, research and commercialization. This year, North Dakota took the next step in UAS advancement with the commercialization and development of Vantis, the nation's first statewide UAS beyond-visual-line-of-sight (BVLOS) network.

Workforce



On Dec. 30, Commerce closed the Technical Skills Training Grant that was created with \$1 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds. This program was designed to support the creation of new, and expansion of, existing accelerated skilled workforce training programs geared toward preparing displaced workers for re-entrance into the workforce in response to the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Technical Skills Training grant supported 12 programs led by both public and private sector training providers. Areas of focus range from CDL and CNA training, to IT and cybersecurity, and wind turbine technician. The most recent training programs added are the final programs supported by the Technical Skills

Training grant: structural welding, pipe welding and heavy equipment operator training, all provided by Silver Fox - Trade Ready in Watford City.

These programs are located in several communities throughout the state and are all sustainable beyond the timeline of this grant and will continue to provide valuable workforce training, further diversifying pathways to employment in the North Dakota.

The Workforce Division also led occupational licensure reform research resulting in precision recommendations to improve talent recruitment and geographic mobility.

An employer-led highly successful \$700,000 biotech skills development program was also administered through Commerce to augment growth towards rapidly growing biotech cluster.

Tourism and Marketing



Commerce's Tourism and Marketing team promoted North Dakota's abundant outdoor recreation and uncrowded activity options that position North Dakota as THE place for safe and worry-free travel.

Tourism elevated North Dakota's image with paid media outreach that garnered 436 million impressions and 591 earned media placements reaching 1.2 billion in 2020.

Tourism reported a 52% increase in visits to NDtourism.com over 2019 with increases from nearly every state. First-time visitors made up 92% of visits (up 78% from 2019)

The division also commissioned research to better understand the state's image, the impact of destination marketing on image and the impact of visitation on potential to attract new residents and businesses. The research showed lifts between 14%-27% in all areas. The research also showed the state's offerings align with the interests of visitors and potentials.

Community Services



The Community Services Division received funds from several federal program to fund programs across the state.

Community Services Block Grant program received funds from the Dept. of Health and Human Services in the amount of \$1,283,797 to go to community action agencies.

The Community Development Block Grant program received funding from Housing and Urban Development in the amount of \$6,380,334 to fund the rent/bridge program in partnerships with North Dakota Department of Human Services.

Emergency Solutions Grant Program received funding from Housing and Urban Development in the amount of \$5,142,580 to be used for homeless shelters and providers in the state.



2020 Commerce Media Highlights

“North Dakota did not completely shut down our state and I have said all along that I hope in retrospect that we see the advantages of

that bear out in our recovery trajectory.” –
Michelle Kommer

[New job market study ranks ND among the top 10 states weathering the effects of the coronavirus](#)

“North Dakota’s cost of living is well below the national average. Not to mention that it’s one of the states with the largest wage gains in recent years.” – Shawn Kessel

[Recognizing North Dakota as a top state for reducing debt](#)

“North Dakota is a collection of small businesses and so because of the heartbeat that they are — we wanted to make sure that we focused on them as best we can.” - Shawn Kessel

[Small businesses thankful for community support during pandemic](#)

“An intermodal train that will arrive in Minot next week will be “arguably the first true intermodal operation in the state of North Dakota. This is the real deal now.” - James Leiman

[Intermodal rail service finally coming to North Dakota](#)

“North Dakota is now taking the opportunity to reinvent itself with a ‘next gen economy’. The biotech and tech industries have experienced strong growth in the state.” – James Leiman

[The Midwest weathers tumultuous times with determination](#)

"In speaking with companies across the state — and we surveyed in excess of 11,000 — everybody had the same response when it came to 'What are your biggest needs?' The resounding answer: ""We need to get customers back in the door."" – James Leiman

[Economic Resiliency Grants buoying North Dakota businesses' pandemic response](#)

“Once we reach that comfort point, I think that we are well-positioned to have a good summer. It may start a little slower because people are going to wait and see.” – Sara Otte Coleman

[North Dakota tourism industry watches, waits amid pandemic](#)

“Staycation” has been part of vacation lingo for a while, but now there’s also the notion of “safecations”. We’ve kind of owned uncrowded, and we’ve owned safe so if there’s going to be a winner in this, I think it might be us.” – Sara Otte Coleman

[Virus upends tourism marketing, sparks idea of ‘safecations’](#)

“The RRVCA exemplifies the power of altruism within our local communities. They are a very successful partner in utilizing federal grants to expeditiously go above and beyond for the communities they serve.” – Bonnie Malo

[North Dakota Department of Commerce awards HOME grant funds to Red River Valley Community Action](#)

“We are happy to support these training providers as they create opportunities to help North Dakotans develop the skills they need to get back to work. Expediting workers’ return to employment is a top priority identified by the American Workforce Policy Advisory Board and this grant will help North Dakota achieve that goal.” – Katie Ralston

Next to come in 2021

Cash Resolutions for
the NEW YEAR
January 25-29 @ 10 AM
@ NDWBC Facebook Page

* Register for the BONUS Q & A with the Experts

North Dakota Women's Business Center
NDWBC
A Partner for Women in Business

J R E C
JAMESTOWN
REGIONAL
ENTREPRENEUR
CENTER

NORTH DAKOTA
SMALL BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT CENTERS
Your Ideas • Our Expertise • Your Success

Cash Resolutions for the New Year

Are you ready to kick off January with the financial tools that are the building blocks of your business? Join this Q & A to learn more!

All week long Jan. 25-29, the Jamestown Regional Entrepreneur Center, Small Business Development Center and the North Dakota Women's Business Center will be highlighting non-traditional, small business financing programs. Learn about these creative funding options from local business lenders and leaders in our region. Each session is followed by an exclusive Q&A session where you can bring your big and small funding questions.

[Click here to learn more](#)

Prepare to Register for the 2021 HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program!



Registration season for the 2021 HIRE Vets Medallion Program is set to begin Jan. 31. Employers will be able to register, or update existing registrations, to participate in the only federal award program that recognizes employers who recruit, employ and retain veterans.

Recipients of the HIRE Vets Medallion Award are part of an elite group dedicated to investing in the professional development of our nation's veterans. If this sounds like you, visit [HireVets.gov](https://www.hirevets.gov) to view requirements and see what past recipients have to say about the program.

The award program is open to employers of any size. There were 675 recognized in 2020 and more are expected for 2021.

Program Criteria