

March 8, 2023
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RE: Support \$8 million for Regional Development, Amendment to ND Dept. of Commerce Bill 1018

I recall a story about a university that hired someone to work on funding. Well, there was no immediate evidence that this was working so they let him go after about a year. Years later monetary bequests from university alumni began to pour in a due to the work of this short term employee. Imagine if they had recognized development is a long term game.

Economic and community development from Regional Councils are long-term games, too. Here is one example: The Roosevelt Custer Regional Council worked with communities, the USDA Rural Development and the Department of Commerce in the 1990's to establish wind monitors. Over a decade later, a wind farm was established in Adams County with over a decade of data to support that development.

There needs to be trained professional people locally to help businesses and communities know about funding and get funding. Roosevelt Custer Regional Council did that. They helped rural communities to apply for grants and raise funds that supported local volunteer groups to have community grocery stores and theaters. They helped with grants to support the renovation of multifamily housing, elderly and low-income housing and community facilities. They provided the first ADA plans for most southwest communities and some businesses to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. They assisted in the funding the original business plan for Red Trail Energy. The assisted in the successful application of federal funds and foundation funds for sustainability which provided over \$8 million for planning and services to communities in western North Dakota which eventually became a long term group, Vision West ND.

The Roosevelt Custer Regional Council dwindled down to one employee due to a lack of funding. During that time, it became ineligible for EDA funds. A very sad lesson to learn as this region lost out on millions in COVID dollars for local businesses. Yes, millions.

I strongly support long-term funding from the State of North Dakota to Regional Councils. We need to support rural North Dakota - Regional Councils do that.

To play and win the game, we need players.