

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
BISMARCK-MANDAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY
APRIL 5, 2004**

What is the best reason for your business to be in North Dakota?

- Access to raw materials
Natural resources
- Quality labor
Education
- Desire to come home to Bismarck
- Desire to live in Bismarck
Good quality of life
- Low cost of living
Low rent
Makes good financial sense
- Good access to water

What is the biggest barrier of doing business in North Dakota?

- Declining population base
- Outmigration
- Difficulty retaining young employees
Difficulty attracting specialized employees
- Need for middle-level management
- High railroad rates
- High air transportation costs
- Attitude of not being able to do things
- Difficult finding jobs for employees' spouses
- Difficulty recruiting employees
- Public perception
Internal and external
- Image of not being able to do high tech jobs

What are the key elements to success in your business?

- Provide service at local, friendly level
- Maintain level playing field
Incentives or subsidies
- Quality people
- Telecommunications
High-speed Internet
Skilled workforce
Funding for growth
- Good workers' compensation rates

In what ways does the state influence your ability to succeed in North Dakota?

- Energy development research
State research
State support
- Cooperative nature of government
- Funding
North Dakota Development Fund
- Government roadblocks
- Information technology infrastructure
Government competing with private business
Not-for-profit organizations competing with private business
- Common sense approach to regulation

- Opportunity to communicate with local government officials
Good access
- Rural housing problems
- Cooperation with government entities
Need level playing field
- Government competition unfair
Government business costs are less expensive than for private business

What one thing could the state do to help your business expand in North Dakota?

- Change internal and external perception of state
- Focus on areas at which the state can be number one to attract businesses or developers
Change laws or regulations to allow for and encourage these focused areas
- Focus groups by state to examine potential growth areas
- Support subsidies for commodities
Federal safety net for prices
- Assistance in developing resources
- Address unfair competition from subsidized businesses
- Invest in primary sector areas that will not displace existing businesses

What must occur for us to retain and expand job opportunities in North Dakota?

What is your overall impression of the state's economic growth prospects?

- Slow, steady growth
- Public afraid of growth
Barriers to growth
Need to be aggressive and change perception of need for growth
- Lack of leadership in business community
- Trends in food sources will affect commodities
- People need to realize competition is good
Encourage business expansion
- Marketing of lifestyle
- Aging population
Impact
- Immigration
Potential areas of growth
Reluctance to accept people
- Need to foster better vocational and technical training and education
Focus on needed skills in state

Do you think there are other states that might be more attractive places to do business? Which and why?

- South Dakota
Tax issues (corporate income taxes)
Grew in population (What are they doing?)
Has marketed business climate for years
- Other states that encourage building of power transmission lines
Wyoming
South Dakota

Who are the key economic development players in this state and what are their roles?

- Local developers and organizations
Greater North Dakota Association
- Bank of North Dakota
- North Dakota Development Fund
- Large businesses
- Tourism
Government
Private sector
- Research universities

- University System

Are there any specific changes needed in legislation, regulations, funding, programs, etc.?

- Investment of public retirement funds in state businesses
- Venture capital funding
- Private investment
- Workforce training and development
- Make it easier to do business with the state
- Encourage industrial growth
 - High-technology industries
 - Invest risk capital in targeted industries
 - Incentives
- Development funding for tourism
 - Build attractions
- Education legislation
 - Vocational tracks
 - Effect of No Child Left Behind
- Promotion of North Dakota businesses
- Assist small business development
- Property taxes
 - Reduce
 - Stop transfer of liability to existing taxpayers
- Oppose initiated measure to require super majority on tax legislation
 - Ties hands of the government

What is the next step in enhancing the business climate?

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
MINOT BUSINESS COMMUNITY
APRIL 6, 2004**

What is the best reason for your business to be in North Dakota?

- Strong work ethic
- Access to good labor at good price
 - Good workforce
- Cooperative environment
- Geography
 - Centralized
- Lower cost
 - Close to markets

What is the biggest barrier of doing business in North Dakota?

- Transportation
 - Geography
- Perception
 - Image needs improvement
- Limited education offerings with respect to technology
- Lack of consumers (for manufacturers)
- Lack of support services for manufacturing and supply chain issues
- Regulatory constraints
 - Telecommunications

What are the key elements to success in your business?

- Access to market
 - Availability
- Funding for equipment
- Skill sets available
- Labor force
- Industry depression
- Expansion financing
- Need for senior management

In what ways does the state influence your ability to succeed in North Dakota?

- Taxes too high
 - Corporate income tax
- Training programs
- Property tax on undeveloped residential properties
- Information technology
 - State doing work in house rather than contracting with private sector
 - Competition from Information Technology Division on projects
- Government outsourcing
 - Let private business compete
- Good workers' compensation rates

What one thing could the state do to help your business expand in North Dakota?

- Corporate tax concessions for growing businesses
- Small business resource centers
 - Technical assistance centers
 - Procurement and supplier information
- State purchasing
 - Buy local
 - Competition with cheap labor

- Procurement incentive programs

What must occur for us to retain and expand job opportunities in North Dakota?

- Change mindset and practices
 - Provide opportunities for North Dakota businesses
 - Look to future target growth areas
 - Be a leader in particular industries
- Address product liability laws
- Level playing field with low-cost producers from South (Mexico)
 - Address outsourcing losses
 - Bring in work
- Incentives to bring in business
 - Need to counteract wrong perceptions
 - Provide opportunities for local people to start businesses
- Bring in big corporation (manufacturers)
 - Provide necessary training at trade schools
- Focus on wealth-creating businesses
 - High tech
 - Other than manufacturing
- Local developers must promote local businesses to new businesses locating here
- Address competition from Canada
 - Payment of federal excise tax

What is your overall impression of the state's economic growth prospects?

- Headed in right direction

Do you think there are other states that might be more attractive places to do business? Which and why?

- South Dakota
 - Corporate and personal income tax laws
- Minnesota
 - Location
 - Job zones

Who are the key economic development players in this state and what are their roles?

- Universities
 - Training
 - Business assistance
- Job Service North Dakota
 - Labor studies

Are there any specific changes needed in legislation, regulations, funding, programs, etc.? What is the next step in enhancing the business climate?

- Evaluation of Information Technology Division practices
 - Confrontational relationship with vendors
- Equipment costs
 - Availability of financing not always tied to new jobs
- Funding for expanding and new businesses
- Keep young people here
- Workforce development programs
 - New jobs training is not up front money for training costs
 - Particularly affects information technology businesses

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
WESTERN RURAL NORTH DAKOTA BUSINESS COMMUNITY
APRIL 5, 2004**

What is the best reason for your business to be in North Dakota?

- Historical assets
- Recreational assets
- Low cost of doing business
- Quality employees
- Quality of raw product
- Safety and security
- Business began on the farm
 - Appropriate labor force
- Good employees
 - Motivated - Productive
- Low population
- Quality of life
- Educational opportunities

What is the biggest barrier of doing business in North Dakota?

- Poor access to market
- High transportation costs
- Lack of availability of transportation
 - Lack of air service
- Lack of people
- Culture
 - Fear of failure
 - Perception
- Distance to suppliers and customers
- Resistance to change
- Lack of cultural events and attractions
- Lack of venture capital and investors
 - No clear system for investment
- Lack of networking
- Need to inform people of available programs
- Recreation policies
 - Barriers to bringing in business
 - Game and fish
 - Expand program
 - Not necessarily primary sector
 - Insurance
- Connection to needed information
- Limited availability of insurance
 - Lack of providers equals higher cost
- Unwillingness of small business to give up control to investors
- Marketing
- Need to make population more worldly
- Attitude
 - Internal and external
 - Need to offer more
- Jurisdictional issues
 - Reservations
- Stereotype that tribes are rich from gaming
 - Federal budget cuts
 - Federal regulations

What are the key elements to success in your business?

- Access to government officials and political leadership
- Resistance to change equals experience and familiarity
- Educated workforce
- Affordable technology
- Innovativeness
- Need succession planning to keep businesses growing
- Higher education integration with economic development
- Local community encouragement
- PACE loans
 - Incentives
- Good work ethic (particularly among older people)
 - Need to maintain with younger workers
- Partnerships between private entities
- Federal projects for contractors
 - Minority contractors (8(a) program)
- Technical training
 - Job Service North Dakota
 - Extension Service
 - Could use state network for online training (not currently available for private use)
- Creation of technology extension service would help rural areas
- Problem keeping technicians in rural areas
- Need expertise in service
 - Financial service
 - Financial experts
- Population is aging
 - Need to fill positions
- Joint powers agreements
 - Help maintain small schools
 - Can utilize networks for business
- Least-visited state equals potential (tourism)
 - Maintain status quo
- Increasing productivity
 - Need training for older workers
- Improve marketing
- Financing
 - Need more access to capital or liberal financing
- Need resources to help retail sector
- Focus on growing industries
- Property tax issues
 - Allowing someone to hold property for years without paying taxes ties up property tax revenues

In what ways does the state influence your ability to succeed in North Dakota?

- Bank of North Dakota
 - One-stop shopping
- Pride of Dakota program
- Agricultural Products Utilization Commission (APUC)
- Bank of North Dakota financing programs
- Tourism director
 - Tourism industry had significant input in selection
- Link financing to job retention, automation, and technology (not just job growth)
 - Help create high-paying jobs, not just more jobs
- Need convention hotels
 - Build infrastructure
 - Need investment (tax credits)

What one thing could the state do to help your business expand in North Dakota?

- Workforce development
 - Specific specialized skills
- Address lack of available housing in rural areas
- Bring back North Dakota graduates who have left
 - Help business locate North Dakotans who have left to fill middle management positions
- Update PACE program
 - Increase amount available
 - Interest buydowns
- Improve transportation access
 - Look for joint solutions with carriers
- Become transportation haven
 - Eliminate sales and use taxes on equipment
- Improve job forecasting
- Increase tourism marketing

What must occur for us to retain and expand job opportunities in North Dakota?

What is your overall impression of the state's economic growth prospects?

Do you think there are other states that might be more attractive places to do business? Which and why?

- Indiana
 - Clustering of businesses and manufacturing
 - Pro-business
- North Carolina
 - Port access
 - Equipment dealers
 - Infrastructure
- Canada
 - Manufacturing
 - Freight subsidies
- Nevada
 - Liability issues
 - No inventory tax
 - Transportation
- California
 - Buy in state
 - Develop products
- Texas
 - Tort issues (recreation businesses)
- Alberta
 - Cooperation between businesses encouraged by provincial government

Who are the key economic development players in this state and what are their roles?

- Higher education
 - Need everyone to work together
 - Teamwork
 - Extension Service

Are there any specific changes needed in legislation, regulations, funding, programs, etc.?

- Make innovation more permissible
 - Need agenda
- Manufacturing network
- Local banks could help (analysis of business plans)
- Increase PACE funds and other state incentive programs
- Increase investments in state
- Private sector/corporate partnerships with research institutions
- North Dakota mutual fund through Bank of North Dakota for loan pool for expansion of businesses

- Kindergarten through grade 12 entrepreneur education programs

What is the next step in enhancing the business climate?