



**NORTH CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

49 Ridgmont Drive, Ridgway, PA 15853

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North Central Board Meeting  
Wednesday, September 27, 2023 – 9:30 AM

Members – via Teams or In Person

Ann Losey	Cameron County
Cliff Clark	Cameron County
Dave Glass	Clearfield County
Jodi Brennan	Clearfield County
Tracy Gerber	Elk County
Padraic McGrath	Elk County
Jeff Pisarcik	Jefferson County
Scott North	Jefferson County
Carol Duffy	McKean County
Nancy Grupp	Potter County
Will Hunt	Potter County
Doug Morley	Potter County
Jill Martin-Rend	At-large BC3@Brockway
Pam Streich	At-large Workforce Solutions
Abbi Peters	At-large PA Wilds

Staff - via Teams or In Person

Jim Chorney  
Amy Kessler  
Samantha Mitchell  
Ed Matts  
Chris Perneski  
Shelly Caggiano  
Julie Kasmierski  
Mary Lou Jessop

Guests

Ann Kaufman	Congressman Thompson's Office
Brian Stockman	Ridgway Record

Chair Ann Losey called the meeting to order at 9:30 AM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**QUORUM/INTRODUCTIONS**

Roll call was taken and there was a quorum for the meeting.

**MINUTES**

With no corrections or amendments to the July 26 and August 23, 2023 Board Minutes, Jeff Pisarcik moved to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Pam Streich. Motion unanimously passed.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Financial Reports

With no corrections or additions to the July and August Financial Reports, Will Hunt moved to accept the Financial Statements as presented, seconded by Nancy Grupp. Motion unanimously passed.

A95s

There were no A95s.

Correspondence

Request for Approval to Proceed with Contracting and Subcontracts Under the Engage! Program Year 2023-2024

Chris spoke briefly on North Central’s application for funds under the Engage! Program for July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024 in the amount of \$159,200. Engage! is a Pennsylvania statewide Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program designed to regularly and proactively interact with CEOs, senior managers and business owners. The NC Engage! Program subcontracts with the NC PREP funded partners for the implementation of the Engage! Program. The exception is Potter County in which the Potter County Education holds the Engage! subcontract as the PREP Partner Potter County Redevelopment Authority did not express any interest in the Engage! Program.

Subcontracts to the NC Engage! Partners will be drafted and are pending. North Central’s application for the contract was submitted on September 5, 2023. The application process has been impacted by the State Budget.

Funding for Engage! subcontracts is based on past performance and or the initial request of interviews:

**Performance Metrics**

<b>Region: North Central Region</b>	<b>2023-2024 Engage! Metrics</b>
Engage Surveys Completed	202
Referrals to Partners	80
Focus Groups/Business Walks	15
Action Plans Developed	200
Action Plans Accepted for Implementation	160

**Budget**

<b>NC Engage! 2023-2024</b>		
<b>Per Interview</b>	<b>Subcontract Allocation</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>
<b>\$750</b>	<b>\$151,500</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Subcontractors</b>	<b>Allocation July 2023</b>	<b>Number of Interviews</b>
Cameron EDC	\$3,000	4
PennWest Clarion SBDC	\$46,500	62
Clearfield EDC	\$38,250	51
Elk St Marys EDC	\$22,500	30
Jefferson County EDC	\$22,500	30
McKean County Commissioners	\$7,500	10
Potter County Education Council	\$11,250	15
<b>Subcontract Total</b>	<b>\$151,500</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Admin Cost</b>	<b>\$7,700</b>	
	<b>\$159,200</b>	

Chair Losey called for a motion to approve the Request for Approval to Proceed with Contracting and Subcontracts Under the Engage! Program Year 2023-2024.

Pam Streich moved to approve the Request for Approval to Proceed with Contracting and Subcontracts Under the Engage! Program Year 2023-2024, seconded by Abbi Peters. Motion unanimously passed.

Purchases

There were two purchases seeking approval.

Ed reported on the first purchase where we are requesting approval for the purchase of 12 Lenovo Thinkbooks 15 G4 Laptops and one HP Color Laserjet Pro MFP M2183fdw Printer for the WIC Program from CDWG Computer Centers, Inc. for a total cost of \$11,318.22. This has been budgeted for.

The second purchase, Amy spoke on and is North Central seeks approval for Technical Consulting Support to modernize workflows through ESRI. This support is vital for establishing and configuring workflows that underpin their Community Capacity impacts and Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), as well as various other transportation planning initiatives. It's important to note that this service falls under the COSTARS Master Purchase Agreement 4400022588 (ESRI Contract Number 00274262.0).

The total cost for the Scope of Services, outlined in the proposal, is not to exceed \$49,106.64. This will be funded from existing transportation and community capacity resources.

Chair Losey called for a motion to approve the purchase of 12 Laptops and one Printer for the WIC Program, as well as Technical Consulting Support through ESRI.

Dave Glass moved to approve the purchase of 12 Laptops and one Printer for the WIC Program, as well as Technical Consulting Support through ESRI, seconded by Jeff Pisarcik. Motion unanimously passed.

#### Resolutions

There were no Resolutions.

#### Loans

There were no Loans.

#### Building Committee Update

Ed gave a brief update. There were numerous questions from the contractors that were here for the walk-through of what we want to have done. Therefore, we delayed the bids until Monday, October 2. There were also questions from the inspector that the 2014 building code changed in 2018, so there were some issues with the building code, which we resolved. They weren't anything major.

Everything is on track; and it seems like there are five contractors engaged in submitting bids. The bids are due October 2 by 3:30 PM. We will have them out to the committee and have a meeting on October 10 to select a contractor.

#### Executive Committee Recommendation

Sam updated the Board regarding the Comprehensive Compensation Analysis RPF. Five proposals were received and were sent to the Executive Committee for their review and scoring on each individual proposal.

On September 22 the Executive Committee met with Jim and Sam where the overall results were reviewed and discussed.

Jim did add that one of the five was for \$130,000 so the Committee really didn't consider that one. The rest were very competitive.

The recommendation from the Executive Committee to the North Central Board is to award NFP the contract for the compensation consulting services to conduct the compensation analysis of North Central in the amount of \$22,500. The kickoff for this project will be Monday, October 2, contingent upon Board approval, to ensure the timeline stays on course and the deadline can be met.

Jim thanked everyone for their time and effort to review and score the proposals.

Ann added that it was a unanimous decision awarding the project to NFP.

Therefore, Chair Losey called for a motion to approve awarding the contract for the compensation consulting services to NFP.

Pam Streich made the motion to approve the awarding of the contract for the compensation consulting services to NFP, seconded by Jeff Piarcik. Motion unanimously passed.

### Tax Assessment Discussion

Jim reported that on September 21 we received a letter from the Elk County Assessment Office setting a date of October 26 at 9:30 AM for us to be able to appeal the changes in the assessment amount. We had filed for this appeal when we were also filing for the exemption of property taxes. Since then, as was brought up to the Board, we received notice that we are exempt from taxes. That won't be effective until January 2024. This hearing will only allow us to discuss the assessed value of the building.

Therefore, Jim's recommendation to the Board is for us to call the Assessment Office and let them know that we are not going to the hearing because we are not necessarily arguing the assessed value of the building. The fact that we're exempt from taxes in January doesn't affect our current tax bill, according to the Assessment Office. There would be no real point going to this hearing.

### CEDS and Grant Opportunities

Jim stated that North Central is increasingly being asked to participate in applications and sometimes being the applicant for some of these projects. One of the questions that is being asked is which ones are appropriate for North Central to be the applicant on and which ones are not. We had an internal conversation to talk a little bit about maybe we need to focus on the CEDS and what is addressed in the CEDS and start looking at regional projects, rather than looking at every individual NOFO that comes out and seeing if it is applicable to a regional project within the North Central region. Perhaps if we identify some projects that are consistent with our CEDs, then we can make the determination as these NOFOs come as to whether they are applicable and whether North Central should be looking to apply on behalf of the region.

We are in the early stages and had this conversation at the CEDS Committee meeting to talk about it.

One of Jim's thoughts was that the CEDS would be a good place to start a conversation because of the makeup of this Committee with most of it being county planners and people that are economically development minded. Does it make sense to identify maybe six projects within the region, one for each county, or maybe even multiple projects within the counties, so that when the opportunities arise with the NOFOs perhaps we could do a regional application?

So how do we get that strategic piece in there? Is the CEDS Committee the right place to start this conversation?

Jim thought this would fit that criterion, but we have to make sure it fits within our six-county region and is something that everyone can agree to and that it's not just benefiting one county over another. That is one of the criteria he wants to look at. As long as we can keep it consistently beneficial to all the portions of our region, he thinks that is what we are looking for. The question is, do we go ahead and identify those projects; and do we ask the CEDS Committee to come up with a number of projects we can discuss as a group and prioritize so when those opportunities arise, we already have a head start on the decision that it is a good regional project that fits within the confines of our CEDS document. Lately we have just been reacting to everything. As people ask us to help them with applications, we will do that. But in order for us to be the applicant, Jim thinks it needs to make sense for us, as a regional entity, that it benefits the entire region and is consistent with what this group's expectations are and what the North Central Board expects.

Jim is looking for suggestions. Do we form a sub-committee or is it part of the normal group and when do we start coming up with projects that everyone feels are good projects that we can consider or rank for future consideration?

A discussion ensued with various thoughts and conversations being brought out.

Ann had to leave the meeting for another meeting, so Dave Glass, as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair, is going to close the meeting.

Amy said there is a disconnect as we typically plan in silos. When you get up in the clouds and look down you can see how to connect the silos; and where we have the common theme is our CEDS Committee. It's made up of economic development and county planning people, along with PA Wilds and Workforce members. The challenge is getting that group to start getting into the weeds of these projects and not staying up in the clouds. How do we get them to start saying these are the projects within each county and having them start connecting and assigning who makes the best group to be applying for these funds.

The CEDS waits for someone else to give the idea and we need to flip that and empower the CEDS, from the Board, to come back with projects to say we feel these would be good for our region. We feel Workforce Solutions should be applying for something for these types of projects within our region.

Again as the CEDS Committee is well rounded and has been appointed by the Board, Amy thinks it is just encouraging and empowering those representatives that you appoint on there to tell people what the projects are in each of the counties that are of interest to you. When you start talking about it at that level the light bulb goes off in other counties and they say they are dealing with the same thing. Then you hear staff ask if this is something we want to look at as a project or is there an opportunity to apply for funding to address that common theme.

She's not sure if the CEDS feels empowered to do that. That is a big key in this. As elected officials if you can empower those staff to say you're representing the county on this committee, and we need you to talk about the projects that are important to our individual county, our individual entity, our individual agency, whatever it may be, then we, as that group, can ascertain what are common theme projects are that we can go after for funding.

Jim added his initial thought was with the CEDS Committee; and at the CEDS Committee meeting last week he threw this idea out and talked to them briefly about it. It wasn't stated that they were definitely doing it, but there were people interested in it. And to Amy's point, and it is a great point, that we have to empower them to be able to do this. If nothing else Jim thought we should move forward with that piece of it at least. Maybe it's a subcommittee to the CEDS, making it a smaller group and being able to start identifying these opportunities so we don't miss out on them, or we don't apply for something because we had lack of time to be able to coordinate services. He thinks that probably is our best approach, but that is why we are discussing this here. He wanted to make sure to get everyone's opinion on it.

Pam added that most of the grants Workforce Solutions apply for they don't step out of Workforce Development, which is why the EDA grant mentioned workforce, but it really wasn't about training. Workforce Solutions will fit into any project as they have training dollars through their One-Stop through the American Job Centers. They are always going after training dollars that they would make fit into any project. They would probably need more workforce representation on the CEDS then. She thinks the meeting conflicts with some of her staff, but they can talk about that another time. It's just hard for them to attend that meeting for some reason.

Jim said if that is the direction we choose to go, he thinks we would have to have more or different meeting times for these meetings only because they only meet quarterly now and that will not be sufficient to be able to address this situation. He thinks they would have to, if you are going with a subcommittee of that group, meet on a more consistent basis to be able to talk about some of the issues and identify some projects or areas of concern that we should be looking at.

Pam said a grant writing committee of a smaller group might not be a bad idea. They tried it many years ago and it's hard to get everyone working on a grant application, but at least it brings all the grants to the forefront of the group. That might not be a bad idea when it comes time to write the grant.

Carol added that if the counties felt there was really something that perhaps three counties liked, they could always hire a consultant or something as well to assist with that project. It really wouldn't offend North Central or Workforce. She values their relationship with you so she doesn't want to step outside, but she also doesn't want to pass by an opportunity that may exist. With the last Recompete they were also having conversations with the Northwest Commission because there were some counties on the western side of McKean that were also interested in looking at that. They are thinking broader in order to match whatever the grant opportunity is. We need to keep that in mind as well.

Jim said North Central wants to be able to provide assistance to any of our counties, but we are not going to be offended if it is bringing money to the region.

Pam said Workforce supports anything and their funds can be leveraged. They write letters of support for multiple grant applications from colleges and universities and there are grants, the Workforce Opportunity in Rural Community, that they have written and have not been successfully awarded yet. That is a multi-state grant; so in order to compete when that comes up next year, Workforce will be partnering most likely with Cattaraugus-Allegheny County Workforce Board.

Amy asked how many counties already have grant writers and this gets back to Pam's point versus hiring out. Maybe if every county has one, we have a couple and we pull that group together to start figuring out

which grants are the most appropriate to apply for, whether it is county-by-county, multi-county, multi-region or multi-state.

When asked how many counties have grant writers or people that would fill that role, Potter County has one (Paul Heimel) and McKean County has one (Ann Robinson).

Jim asked Amy if this might be the start of the subcommittee to empower the CEDS to start looking at this?

Amy thought that perhaps have Ann and Paul along with Elise and Sherry, from our staff, form that starting committee to talk to the CEDS Committee about the opportunities that we have identified and what projects do you have.

Jim asked if the Board is okay with us approaching the CEDS to discuss having a group to do this, whether it's the grant writers or not. This is not a formal motion. He wants to make sure it is okay and if anyone disagrees with this, then we would talk about a different way of doing it. He does think the CEDS Committee is a great starting point.

Dave said that nothing is cast in stone so if we go down this path and if it's not right, we can always find a different answer.

Jim stated we will start having a conversation with the CEDS Committee to talk about addressing this and seeing what we can do about starting to identify ways to identify projects.

#### Good of the Order

Jim stated he will be on vacation the week of October 1 and returning to the office on Tuesday, October 10. He is not sure how much cell service he will have so it may be hard to contact him if necessary.

Ann Kaufman of Congressman Thompson's Office stated that a government shutdown is looming this weekend. There is a lot going on the Hill right now to pass some appropriations to make sure we can hopefully avoid a shutdown and continue funding. That is the Congressman's top priority right now. Being Chair of the Ag Committee, one of his priorities is the Farm Bill that is set to expire in a few days. That is the news on the Hill and what their focus is.

#### Adjournment

With no other business to be discussed, Vice Chair Glass called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jeff Pisarcik moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Carol Duffy. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Padraic McGrath, CPA  
Secretary/Treasurer