

Quarter 2, 2022 Newsletter  
**Right on Track**

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**Letter from the President**

IEDC continues to lead important efforts in our community. Fostering the partnerships around the region, we are working together to bring new and unique opportunities home.

We greeted the slow arrival of spring on the tails of several new grant awards, spurring the startup of Welcoming Communities, Thrive Up North's new "Luring You to Itasca County", and The Forge Project Design, just to name a few. It is rewarding to ignite these new opportunities in our community and work closely with critical community partners.

Our team continues to bring their passion and skill to each project. I am very proud of their tenacity facing challenges as well as their innovation and excitement in each new venture. You will hear more about the many projects led by our team in the newsletter, but I wanted to take a moment to extend an invitation.

Join Us! I recognize everyone is busy and running in multiple directions, but we are renewing our commitment to engage our community in our many initiatives.

Do you have a passion for workforce development? Click [here](#) to learn more about Thrive Up North and marketing to recruit people to our region...or click [here](#) to email Kayla Swanson to learn about the Community Advisory Group as they study the issues around workforce retention in Itasca County...or click [here](#) to email Brock Holm to learn more about the Future Forest Stewards Event taking place in September to introduce and recruit high school students to the forest products industry.

Are you ready and excited about working to make our community more welcoming? Click [here](#) to email Kayla Swanson to learn more about Welcoming Communities work and the efforts of



many partners and community members to address issues related to inclusion and diversity.

Do you wish you had an opportunity to engage with other community members and seek new ways to improve and grow our home? Click [here](#) to learn more about the Lyceum Movement and the work to bring this great community event to Itasca County.

These are just a few of the opportunities available to you to engage with IEDC and ensure your voice is at the table. Reach out to our team to learn more about projects and initiatives we are proud to lead. Work of this magnitude is only achieved through the dedication of community members like yourselves.

A special thank you to all our volunteers from the IEDC Board, Funding Partners, Thrive Up North Taskforce Members, Welcoming Communities, Itasca Summit Advisory Committee Members, The Forge, and Innovate 218. You all are critical parts of our success, and we THANK YOU.

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## SBDC Updates

Second Quarter of 2022, as to turn the corner of half-way through the year, businesses are doing well, and we have seen 4 new business starts already this year! Supply chain, inflation and workforce remain at the top of the “challenges” list through this year.



We are happy to announce we are ramping up classes again, Profit Mastery will start in July as well as other exciting opportunities through the SBDC and partners like Entrepreneur Fund to deliver timely and relevant education for business owners.

Succession Planning – What is it, and why is it important? Succession Planning is the process of determining an exit strategy for a business owner. The basic rule of thumb is to start this process a minimum of 5 years before exiting the business. We can help you understand this process, identify options and develop a strategy to engage all the needed resources to make your business succession a success!

Marketing, do you have a marketing strategy? With the business environment changes over the last couple of years, there is a good chance your marketing needs have also change. We can help in identifying strategies and reaching your new customer base! SBDC has traditionally been know to help start up business, however we are here for all businesses throughout their journey!

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## 4-26-2022: Zenith

On April 26th, Duluth Area Chamber of

Commerce and Aimclear hosted the Zenith Digital Marketing Conference in Duluth, MN. Operations and Outreach Manager, Kayla Swanson represented IEDC as an attendee.

This conference was held at the Greysolon Ballroom and featured a variety of topics regarding SEO, content strategy, paid advertising and more. These topics were presented by subject matter experts from organizations including Microsoft, Pubcon, and Aimclear.



## 4-27-2022: Launch MN Summit

Project Manager, Amanda Lamppa and President, Tamara Lowney attended Launch MN's first ever Summit on April 27th at the State Capitol.

Amanda says, "It was GREAT to see all the regions of the state come together at the Capitol and state our case for WHY boosting up the start up entrepreneurial ecosystem is important. There certainly is no shortage of creativity in Minnesotan entrepreneurs!"

After the capitol, Amanda and Tamara toured multiple innovation centers and coworking spaces in the metro alongside CEO of ILT Academy, Nick Tietz.



## 4-28-2022: MLEP Conference

On April 27 and 28, SBDC Consultants Nichole Arbour and Rob Sjostrand presented trainings to over 300 participants involved in local logging companies.

Rob presented on succession planning, focusing on two ways to exit your business: leave a legacy (retirement plan) or to pass it on to a family member. Nichole presented on Marketing in the Logging Business: Creating a Digital Footprint, focusing on the importance of shifting the logging narrative and creating a presence online through Google Business Profiles, Facebook business pages, and a company website.



Both of their sessions were full, with great positive feedback. Many expressed interest in

working with SBDC, have connected with SBDC in their area, and some have followed up with Rob and Nichole for more information.



## 5-6-2022: Tour of Opportunities

The city of Aitkin's Chamber of Commerce recently hosted a Tour of Opportunities where local folks could come out and talk to multiple businesses about their business ideas. Project Manager, Amanda Lamma attended this event and hosted a booth on behalf of Innovate 218.

Amanda said that it was amazing to see how many resources are out there to help people with their business ideas and bring them to fruition, such as free classes to help you refine your idea, to outside-of-the-box funding to make your business a reality.

## 5-10-2022: State of Manufacturing



On May 10th, Enterprise Minnesota Hosted a State of Manufacturing event at Rapids Brewing Co.

The staff at Rapids Brewing prepared an amazing breakfast prior to the start of the event, which allowed for networking among local manufacturers and affiliates, including: educators, elected officials, economic development professionals, granting agencies and members of the media.

This event featured a presentation by Enterprise Minnesota's President, Bob Kill, where he broke down the results of the 13th annual State of Manufacturing survey. IEDC was honored to sponsor this event in Itasca County.

## 5-11-2022: The Rink

Innovate 218 held its 2nd pitch competition at Rapids Brewing on May 11th. There were 5 pitchers invited to present LIVE and \$6,000 in prize money was given out to the top three



local/regional pitchers.

All three of the winners were recent graduates from our most recent 10-week ILT academy virtual lean classes. If you have a business idea, we will be offering another set of virtual classes starting at the end of August. Classes are a \$2400 value, but provided at no charge for individuals chosen to participate.

If you are interested in joining our next series of virtual classes to refine your ideas, please register on this link! <https://iltacademy.io/explore-programs/innovate218-fall-2022/> or contact Amanda Lamppa at [alamppa@itascadv.org](mailto:alamppa@itascadv.org)

## 5-16-2022: Native American Entrepreneurial Empowerment Workshop

IEDC/Innovate 218 was invited to present and take part in a two-day Native American entrepreneurial workshop which took place in Tower, MN.

It was great to get connected with the various tribes and see the momentum and spirit of entrepreneurialism grow there. Project Manager, Amanda Lamppa says, "The most eye opening part of this workshop was learning about native culture and their views on selling their goods."



## 6-1-2022: EDAM Summer Conference

Kayla Swanson, Rob Sjostrand, Tamara Lowney, Amanda Lamppa, Nichole Arbour, and Sarah Carling attended the EDAM (Economic Development Association of Minnesota ) Summer Conference at Grand View Lodge in Nisswa.

They were able to enhance their economic development knowledge and stay informed about trends that impact our communities. Sessions addressed essential topics in economic development including childcare, housing, filling vacant commercial space, site selection, supply chain logistics, creating a welcoming environment, succession planning, and supporting entrepreneurship.

This was a wonderful few days of learning, connecting, and solution generating conversations.

## 6-3-2022: First Friday

Held on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, people enjoyed a beautiful spring evening as they wandered the streets of Grand Rapids for the First Friday Art Walk.

At IEDC, entertainment was provided by the engaging Marnie Schafer. Over 100 people visited our office to listen to her music and enjoy the beautiful artwork of Kristen Anderson. Appetizers were provided by *Pinched*, a new (and highly recommended) catering service in Grand Rapids. Special treats were provided by Miss Sara's Northern Treats Cupcakery and as usual, there were none left!



Make plans to visit us on September 2<sup>nd</sup> as we once again celebrate local artists.



## 6-8-2022: Summit Advisory Group

As many of you are aware, The Summit Advisory Group has been meeting and collaborating since the conclusion of the 2021 Itasca Summit.

The Advisory group split into two sub-groups after strategically voting on important topics that came from the Summit Conversations. The two groups are:

### 1. **Itasca Strong: Love where you work**

Workforce retention was a key summit discussion. The group will hire a consultant to help craft a survey to analyze workforce and workplace culture in the businesses of Itasca County. These results will drive a one-day Workforce Retention Summit. The goals of this group are to engage workforce and employees in sharing best practices, improving workforce culture, and welcoming new and diverse workforce.

### 1. **Itasca Strong: Lyceum**

The second group chose to adopt the Lyceum Movement model. This model sparks community conversation in a unique way. The Lyceum Organization is a national organization that will handle the Eventbrite registration, create the themes and articles, provides idea sharing, and general support. The only thing that our committee is in charge of is selecting the monthly speakers and promoting the events. These events will take place at the same time, day of month, and location for at least six months. The chosen speakers will be from **different areas of our county** based on the monthly theme. Itasca Strong: Lyceum is a pilot program. We are hoping that after seeing our first 6-month pilot program, other communities in Itasca County will take the idea and run with it in their own communities with our help and the remaining seed money from our group. Please find more information at: <https://www.lyceummovement.org/>.

We would love for you to learn more. Both groups will be presenting their projects and

updates at a lunch meeting on August 23<sup>rd</sup> at 11:30 am at The Timberlake Lodge.

Please complete the following Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/itasca-summit-advisory-group-presentations-tickets-367803238387> to **RSVP by Wednesday, August 10<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm.**

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## 6-13-2022: IEDC/APEX Chamber Luncheon

Each year, IEDC hosts a chamber luncheon that is sponsored by APEX. This year's IEDC luncheon took place on June 13th at the Timberlake Lodge.

Senior Business Developer of APEX, Matt Shermoen introduced IEDC President, Tamara Lowney. Tamara gave a presentation that showcased all that we have been up to at IEDC. This presentation covered various topics from The Forge, Thrive Up North, Welcoming Communities, Innovate 218, SBDC, and more!

There were 53 attendees who were able to network prior to the presentation over lunch served by the amazing team at the Timberlake.



## 6-15-2022: Engage

Engage sessions take place quarterly, and feature topics that are targeted towards small business. Typically, these sessions will occur on the third month of every quarter during the third week of that month over Zoom.

June's Engage session was presented by President, Tamara Lowney and created by Operations & Outreach Manager, Kayla Swanson.

The Thrive Up North Campaign was the focus, and it stressed how area businesses and organizations can leverage Thrive's new Incentives Program, "Luring you to Itasca," with their new hires.

Stay tuned for our next Engage session in September! Topic is yet to be determined.

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## 6-21-2022: Powering Inclusions Summit

On June 21st, 2022, Operations & Outreach Manager, Kayla Swanson attended the Powering Inclusions Summit hosted by Center for Economic Inclusion.

The Summit included a variety of powerful presentations and interviews with individuals that are dedicated to inclusive workplaces and economic growth. The Summit was also an opportunity for the staff at Center for Economic Inclusion to report the findings of their Racial Equity Dividends Index.

If you are interested in learning more about these efforts, head to their website today!

<https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org/>



## Welcoming Communities of Itasca County

"Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard." **Liz Fosslien.**

IEDC has had the opportunity to lead many important efforts over the years, but none so critical as Welcoming Communities. Efforts in this area, not only represent the values we strive to

nurture here, but also the success of community and economic development. We hope to not only foster behavior, communication and outreach that is welcoming but also to be present and hear the voices of those who are here facing diversity and challenges every day. IEDC initiated this effort by bringing together community members that are passionate about this work earlier this year.

Throughout the last quarter, IEDC has been reaching out to partners, leaders, and community members to gain valuable insights and ideas around how to start this effort. In this preliminary work, we heard from Northspan, a regional partner in community and economic development, on the research they completed in the past year about Welcoming Communities in Northeast Minnesota. We also had presentations from several expert consultants that have the potential of providing facilitation, guidance, and strategy for our effort.

Following the presentations, our taskforce met and held small group conversations on the value of those organizations and feedback on direction. The taskforce's recommendation is to work with more than one organization, allowing for a strong and locally connected approach. At our next meeting we will dial in on the organizations and finalize our consultant decision. Once a consultant is engaged, we expect much more outreach throughout the community including but not limited to town hall meetings, surveys, and one-on-one conversations. It is our intention to have our consultant/s lead the discussion with the taskforce and community around strategy, priorities, goals, and outcomes.

The members of our taskforce are passionate and candid about this important cause. We are incredibly grateful for their commitment. We welcome others to join us at



any level, by attending meetings, helping with outreach, or simply providing candid feedback on a one-on-one basis. Please reach out to Kayla Swanson, [kswanson@itascadv.org](mailto:kswanson@itascadv.org).

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## MN DEED Energy Transition Taskforce

IEDC's President, Tamara Lowney, was selected to join in the Energy Transition Advisory Committee. The committee was established to develop a statewide energy transition plan and to advise the governor, the commissioner, and the legislature on transition issues, established transition programs, economic initiatives, and transition policy.

The Advisory Committee has been working collectively to research, learn and understand the landscape of energy transition. Itasca County will host the September meeting for the Energy Transition Advisory Committee. We welcome community members to attend and provide feedback to this group. If you are interested in attending, please reach out to Kayla Swanson, [kswanson@itascadv.org](mailto:kswanson@itascadv.org).

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## Welcome: Brock Holm!

This Summer, IEDC secured the MNEDF Community Internship Grant. This grant helps cover some of the cost to host a summer internship here at our office.

After much consideration and interviewing many great candidates, we have hired Brock Holm as our intern.

Brock graduated from GRHS in 2020. He also obtained his Associates Degree from Itasca Community College in 2020 through the postsecondary learning program. He went on to NDSU and will be a senior this coming fall, majoring in Business Management.

He has interests that correlate to our everyday work as well as strong work experience in finance and business. After graduation from NDSU, Brock hopes to move home to Itasca County to begin a career in a related field.

Brock brings a diligent work ethic and we are excited to have him on board.

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COMING FALL 2022

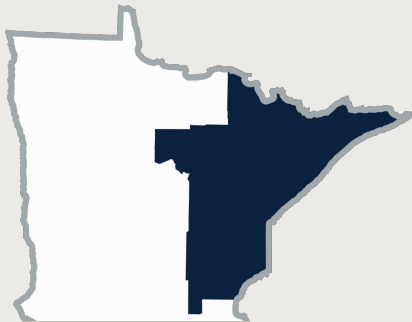


THE  
**FORGE**  
WHERE IDEAS TAKE SHAPE

## The FORGE: Where Ideas Take Shape

Great progress has been made on the Forge project, a business incubator, and education center for industrial skills. We have completed the design of the education center, and will soon begin construction/remodel of the building. Phase 2, coming the second half of 2022, will be the individual business incubator areas that will allow small businesses to have a ramp up phase with business training and development to allow for a higher success rate for Itasca County.

This project would not be possible without our partners at Minnesota North Colleges, JET, and Career Pathways. Please watch for more updates, and announcements on the Forge, as this project enters the construction phase and targets a grand opening end of 2022.



**INNOVATE**  
**218**

## Innovate 218 Updates

Networking! Networking! Networking! That's the name of the game for Innovate 218! Our 9-county footprint makes communicating and networking quite a task when broadcasting just what Innovate 218 has cooking and the many resources available to folks who live in NE Minnesota!

Innovate 218 is a program funded by LAUNCH MN. Since Innovate 218 started, we have held 2 pitch competitions and given out \$16k in prizes to winning ideas. We have hosted two different 10-week virtual cohorts for the lean business canvas and multiple workshops through ILT Academy. We have visited

various regions through different networking events, and attended many conferences or webinars that are targeted towards entrepreneurship. The excitement doesn't stop there! Learn more about how Innovate 218 can help you! Head to <https://innovate-218.com/>.

## Thrive Up North Updates

In 2020, Thrive Up North was created as a collaborative rural recruitment campaign to get people to live, work, and play in Itasca County.

Prior to this year, we were spearheading

these efforts through storytelling of others who relocated here or moved away from the area to return home.

In 2022, we ramped up our efforts through an incentives program, "Luring You to Itasca." This package includes: \$2,000, an RTIC cooler, \$50 to a local brewery, \$50 to a local meat shop, and two Thrive Up North branded lures. Applicants can apply by going to our website. Once their application is received, the selection committee goes through the verification steps to move the application forward.



We are extremely happy with the results of this program thus far, and are looking forward to more Itasca County businesses leveraging it for new hires. Interested in learning more? Click [here](#) to go to our website.



## **APEX - Sustainable building = Healthy Sustainable Forests**

Matt Shermoen, APEX Senior Business Developer, attended the 7th Annual Mass Timber Conference in Portland, OR, in April. With over 2,000 attendees and 100+ exhibitors, the energy and excitement in the room were palpable. Every aspect of the conference, from casual networking to the four learning tracks, focused on helping mass timber become more widespread throughout North America.

“The APEX team is working diligently to attract a mass timber manufacturer to the APEX region,” said Shermoen. “Attending the Mass Timber Conference solidified the fact that we are strategically positioned to support the mass timber industry’s growth. We have access to the right kind of timber resources, a skilled and knowledgeable workforce and the infrastructure required to move the product where it needs to go.”

As mass timber adoption continues to increase, industry leaders suggest kicking off building design proposals with 100% mass timber instead of spending time comparing construction types. Starting with timber and working backward to increase efficiencies in time, labor and costs by incorporating some concrete or steel, will increase the amount of timber used in each project.

The mass timber industry is unified, working together to educate and build each other up to strengthen the case for increased use of mass timber. Every company at every point along the mass timber supply chain has a role to play. Harvesters, manufacturers and fabricators are continually improving to produce high-quality timber products. Architects,

engineers and construction professionals are putting in the work to learn how to build more efficiently and sustainably with wood.

## CEDA Updates



"The summer months have brought severe storms to the Itasca Area. Deer River had an extreme amount of tornado and wind damage to many buildings and trees throughout the city on the evening of May 31<sup>st</sup>. The ball fields were heavily damaged and impossible to play on leading into the little league seasons. The Deer River community needed help and CEDA was there to step up to the plate. The following day after the storm CEDA was there on site to assist in any way they could, such as gathering volunteers, creating Facebook posts for the city, and orchestrating volunteers at the worksites. CEDA was able to help for 2 days and made an enormous impact on the cleanup.



Deer River was also chosen as the United Way Day of Action location for 2022. The Day of Action was in partnership with United Way, Itasca Habitat for Humanity and CEDA. CEDA assisted by canvassing the city of Deer River prior to the event to find locations in need, creating a database of information necessary for volunteer and equipment numbers, and also creating Facebook posts for the event. This year's Day of Action included a total of 108 volunteers who contributed nearly 500 hours which equaled an estimated value of over \$17,000. The event helped the Deer River community complete 19 projects that helped revitalize the curb appeal of the city and prepare them for their 2022 Annual Wild Rice Festival. The projects mainly focused on cleaning and repainting the streets while also revitalizing residential homes, buildings, the community garden and the ball fields.

IEDC was also kind enough to volunteer some of their efforts and time to assist in both of these opportunities to aid our local community



## Entrepreneur Fund - Advancing Economic Justice Through Entrepreneurship

At the Entrepreneur Fund we believe entrepreneurs and small businesses have the profound power to shape thriving and inclusive communities across our region. We are thrilled to introduce a new program that was launched this quarter to directly support Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs across the region.



Stride is a comprehensive program designed to create a low barrier entry and peer focus to business ownership and growth for BIPOC entrepreneurs. Participants will gain individualized support, accountability, and networks to grow their confidence as an entrepreneur. Grants up to \$7,000 and 0% interest loans are also accessible through the program. The program is the first of its kind in the region. Participants have access to two track options: Start-Up for those ready to launch a business and Level-Up for those with existing businesses who want to expand. Stride targets participation across our rural, native, and urban communities. **Learn more about the Stride program.**

**We know that we're stronger together, that's why we ask our partners to please share this new program with those in your network.** Increasing access to entrepreneurship for our communities of color increases community vibrancy, diversifies local economies and tackles systematic issues. Much work is yet to be done, but we are proud of this meaningful step forward.

Our team continues to stay highly engaged with partner organizations and small businesses across the region. Between January and June of this year, we have partnered with over 40 small businesses and provided a total of \$1,217,955 in flexible financing to grow small business in Itasca County.

#### Upcoming Events:

- July 20; 1-2pm: **Building Business Confidence Through Numbers** (Free Live Online Training) facilitated by EF accounting advisor, Joan Kane and EF business developer, Miranda Kishel
- August 17; 1-2pm: **Asking for a Loan – You're Not Alone** (Free Live Online Training) facilitated by EF director of business finance, Michael Lattery and EF business advisor, Stephanie Williams
- October 11; 9am – 1pm: **SOAR Conference for Women in Business** (Virtual + In-Person Components)

We look forward to our continued partnership with IEDC to best serve our small businesses in Itasca County.

**Click Here to Visit Our Events Calendar Today for Future Events!**

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