

Martin County Economic Development Authority

2010 Annual Report

201 Lake Avenue

Fairmont, MN 56031

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www.martincountyeda.org



Inspire **G**rowth and **N**urture **I**nnovative **T**alent through **E**mpowerment

Dear Stakeholders:

It has been a landmark year for most. Many individuals locally and across the nation have suffered from extraordinary events in 2010; people lost their jobs, homes, businesses, and the like. 2010 was devastating for many small businesses as they struggled to keep their doors open, hire employees, secure capital, and expand operations because of increased regulation and economic uncertainty.

There is one element that remains constant in a boom or bust economy; innovation, job creation, and economic growth are all fostered by the engine of our economy, small business. For this reason, the Martin County EDA remained focused on optimizing our Business Facilitation program, *IGNITE*. In late 2007, we teamed up with the Riverbend Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation (RCEF) to implement *IGNITE*. The program provides individuals, entrepreneurs, and existing businesses in Martin County with the resources, support, and inspiration they need to prosper. We successfully contributed to building a more robust Martin County by exceeding all our clients' expectations and controlling our operating expenses of approximately \$67,012.51. Highlights of our 2010 accomplishments include:

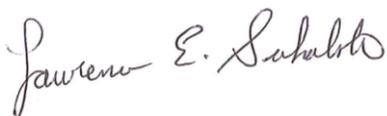
- Diligently worked with 48 clients.
- Spent over 341 hours assisting clients.
- Prudently facilitated 9 new start-up businesses.
- Stabilized and expanded 23 businesses.
- Assisted in the preservation and creation of 62 jobs.
- Successfully helped secure approximately \$172,000 in capital for our clients.

As a result of our strong commitment, our performance indicators soared over the previous years. Adding to our economic impact, we played an active role in many community development events such as Area Career Exploration (ACE), the Martin County Leadership program, Minnesota Marketplace for Entrepreneurs (MME), Martin County Fair, to name a few. Our impact is not only on the clients we serve, but Martin County, Southern Minnesota, and the economy as a whole.

Overall, we had an exceptional year. Our success continues to grow every year and we have an exciting vision set for 2011. As an obligation to our stakeholders, we will focus on strengthening and growing our strategic partnerships and explore new opportunities to increase the quality of our services.

On behalf of our stakeholders, we thank you for your generous support.

Sincerely,



Lawrence Sukalski
Board President
Martin County EDA

Martin County EDA Summary:

In 2007, Martin County political representatives recognized and supported the efforts of the Riverbend Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation (RCEF) located in Mankato, MN. RCEF is a non-profit entrepreneur and business development organization. The representatives found value in its services, which led to a discussion of partnering to employ the RCEF business model in Martin County. Representatives lobbied and received funding from the State of Minnesota to implement the plan as an initiative of the Martin County EDA.

Late 2007 the Martin County EDA officially partnered with RCEF. The two entities collaborated to develop, brand, and implement an entrepreneur focused economic development program called **IGNITE**. Our mission is to **I**nspire **G**rowth and **N**urture **I**nnovative **T**alent through **E**mpowerment, which mirrors the unique and established RCEF business model. We implemented the program to provide individuals, entrepreneurs, and existing businesses in Martin County with the resources, support, and inspiration they need to prosper. All of our services are confidential and of no cost to the client. Some of our services include:

- Needs, Goals, and Business Assessments
- Business Plan Writing/Development
- Feasibility Studies
- Sales & Marketing Plans
- Financial Analysis
- Start-up and Expansion Assistance
- Sources of Capital Counseling
- Strategic Planning
- Market Research
- Professional Management Advice

Our key objectives of the program are to start, grow, and strengthen businesses; retain and create jobs; increase tax revenues; and create a welcoming environment for innovation and economic development. Since its inception, Martin County Business Facilitators have provided professional guidance to 115 clients ranging from individuals with a business idea to million dollar corporations. They effectively helped start 51, stabilize 29, and expand 25 businesses, resulting in the preservation or creation of 112 jobs within the 10 communities of Martin County over the past three years. We also take an active role in many economic development activities and events in Martin County.

2010 *IGNITE* Highlights:

The **IGNITE** program continued its success in 2010. We effectively provided technical business assistance to 48 entrepreneurs and small businesses and spent more than 341 hours assisting those clients with their needs. Adding to our accomplishments, we facilitated the creation of 9 new businesses, while stabilizing 8 and expanding 15. Most importantly, we served as a catalyst in maintaining and creating approximately 62 jobs in Martin County.

Utilizing the RCEF business model in Martin County allows us exceptional cost savings. Year after year we are able to produce tremendous results off very little expenses. In fact, our operating expenses for 2010 totaled \$38,184.65, resulting in a cost per job created or maintained of only \$615.88.

During 2010 we noticed a few trends do enlarge by the weak economy, massive employer layoffs, housing foreclosures, a tight credit market, Federal Health Care reform, increase in fuel costs, and a whole host of other variables. Some trends we observed were a spike in dislocated workers, seniors, veterans, and looking for business capital. The economy has also compelled many businesses to either close the doors or divert to a new plan. However, we took the initiative to train our facilitators to successfully meet and exceed the demands of our clientele.

As a part of our strategic plan, in September of 2010 we set a goal to visit with each community in Martin County. The meetings comprise of city officials, economic development individuals, bankers, chamber officers, councilmen, and any other relevant community leaders that impact businesses and entrepreneurs in their respective community. Our goals of each meeting are to explain the services we offer and to get an understanding of how we can work cohesively to help businesses and entrepreneurs prosper. However, before we began scheduling any meetings, we needed something to leave behind with each community to hand out to individuals in need. So we put together a resource folder outlining information about the Martin County EDA **IGNITE** program, information on internships, starting up a business, loan programs, veteran services for businesses, key websites, USDA information, and much more. After constructing the resource folders, we set up community meetings. During the month of December we met with two communities, Trimont and Welcome. The meetings and resource folders proved to be a large success to help promote **IGNITE** and create awareness about our services. The people of the communities are extremely excited about our services and our willingness to help.



Another element we are focused on is bringing more education to Martin County for small business owners. Starting late 2010 we started planning seminars and workshops to be offered in Fairmont, MN. We developed a list of classes and began coordinating several events beginning in early 2011. In addition, one course we hosted and taught during the summer of 2010 is Core Four Business Planning. The class was stretched over four weeks. Our instructors walked participants through each component of the business plan. At the end of the course each participant received a certificate for completing the course and had a working copy of a business plan.



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In an effort to help promote our services and involvement, we participated in several community development activities and events such as the Martin County Fair, Minnesota Marketplace for Entrepreneurs (MME), Area Career Exploration (ACE), Martin County Leadership Program, *IGNITE* Internship Program, Bureau 14, and Fairmont Lakes Historic District project.

Overall, we are tremendously pleased with our outcomes for 2010. We are grateful of the continued funding support we receive each year from the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) and Martin County to administer our business facilitation program. The *IGNITE* program is growing in success; partnerships are robust, we are creating more jobs each year, helping more clients, and positioning ourselves to serve all client needs. We look forward to our continued role as a catalyst in creating jobs through entrepreneurial focused economic development.

2010 Martin County EDA Board of Directors & Business Facilitators

Board of Directors:

The Martin County EDA Board of Directors all have unique backgrounds and contribute to the strategic direction of the organization in different ways. They oversee all the activities of the Martin County EDA and take an active role in economic development activities. The Martin County Board of Directors is appointed by the Martin County Board of Commissioners; they serve a three-year term and meet on a monthly basis to conduct business.

Name	Position	Occupation	Affiliation
Lawrence Sukalski	Board President	National Director	American Soybean Association
Randy Grupe	Board Vice President	Superintendent	Martin County West
Christopher Pierce	Secretary/Treasurer	Commercial Lender	First Farmers & Merchants National Bank
Dan Schmidtke	Board Director	Commissioner	Martin County
Gerald Boler	Board Director	Commissioner	Martin County
Steve Pribyl	Board Director	Chief Administrative Officer	Fairmont Medical Center – Mayo Health Systems
Jerry Clark	Board Director	Business Transaction Specialist	SealedBid

Business Facilitators:

The Martin County EDA hired RCEF Business Facilitators as independent contractors to carry out all the business facilitative services of the organization. Their primary responsibility is to assist entrepreneurs and small business owners with their needs.

Name	Position
Bryan Stading	Senior Business Facilitator
Jon Herzog	Business Facilitator

2011 Outlook

The Martin County EDA has a brilliant strategic plan set for 2011. We have full intentions of maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of the *IGNITE* business facilitation program. We will spend most of our energies helping entrepreneurs and small businesses prosper in Martin County. In efforts to help entrepreneurs conveniently grow their business skills and knowledge, we will be hosting several training seminars in Fairmont, MN.

We are increasingly poised to create greater awareness of our program. One key tool that we have recently added to our arsenal is a new website, specifically dedicated to the Martin County EDA. This is a wonderful tool for any entrepreneur looking to start a business. On the website you can find several business planning templates, financing options, training seminars, and much more. In addition to our website, we intend to build a very compelling marketing plan that incorporates Facebook, LinkedIn, web blogs, radio advertising, magazine columns, and newspaper ads. We will also remain very active in attending community related events to leverage networking.

Another key element that we will focus on is building and strengthening our relationships with local and non-local entities to provide our clients with a stronger network of resources. We will partner with some of these entities to carry out economic development initiatives. We also plan to be more active in community projects and events, namely continuing to meet with each of the communities in Martin County to address their needs.

Finally, in efforts to address budget deficits we are looking at creating a framework to identify the current and future challenges and opportunities for Martin County. The idea is to take a proactive approach to identify and mitigate challenges and develop long-term solutions to build a stronger, more competitive, and vibrant county. We are extremely excited and confident that this endeavor will result in a more robust fiscal position for Martin County now and into the future.

This report is a snapshot of the reporting period: January 1, 2010 - December 31, 2010.