

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

for Region 8



WORKFORCE



INFRASTRUCTURE



RURAL DEVELOPMENT



INDUSTRY



ABOUT REGION 8

Southwest North Dakota is a primarily rural region spanning eight counties, rich in agricultural heritage and natural beauty across 10,002 square miles of prairies, buttes, and the iconic Badlands. Its economy is rooted in agriculture, ranching, and a thriving energy sector, bolstered by oil, gas, and coal resources within the Bakken Formation. Tourism is also on the rise, with over 500,000 visitors drawn annually to the area's attractions, including Medora and Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Dickinson, the largest city, serves as the region's economic hub. While strengths include diverse industries, robust infrastructure, and a high quality of life, the region faces challenges with workforce shortages, limited housing, and workforce gaps. Opportunities for growth include value-added agriculture, energy innovations, expanding tourism, and regional collaboration, even as the area contends with high construction costs and climate-related risks. With its strong sense of community and development potential, Southwest North Dakota strives to balance economic growth with preserving its rural character.

WORKFORCE

ADDRESS HOUSING SHORTAGES

High construction costs and a lack of contractors make it challenging to develop workforce housing in Southwest North Dakota.

SUPPORT funding to close appraisal gaps and increase incentives for rural workforce housing development to attract and retain employees.



\$375,000+

Estimated cost to build a modest 1,500 sq. ft. home in Southwest North Dakota

Supporting REGION 8



Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope, and Stark Counties

ADDRESS CHILDCARE SHORTAGES

Limited childcare openings severely impact workforce participation for families across SW ND, as facilities struggle to sustain wages that can retain qualified staff due to a challenging business model.

ENSURE accessible, affordable childcare by expanding on childcare legislation, funding facility expansions, and addressing childcare worker wages across the region.



EXPAND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

A shortage of skilled workers, especially in healthcare, manufacturing, oil, and service industries, limits growth and service availability.

INCREASE support for training and incentives for apprentice programs targeting high-need sectors and expand the Regional Workforce Impact Program with regional-level decision-making.



EXPAND RESOURCES FOR TRANSPORTATION AND ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Aging roads, bridges, and energy systems limit development and accessibility across Southwest North Dakota.

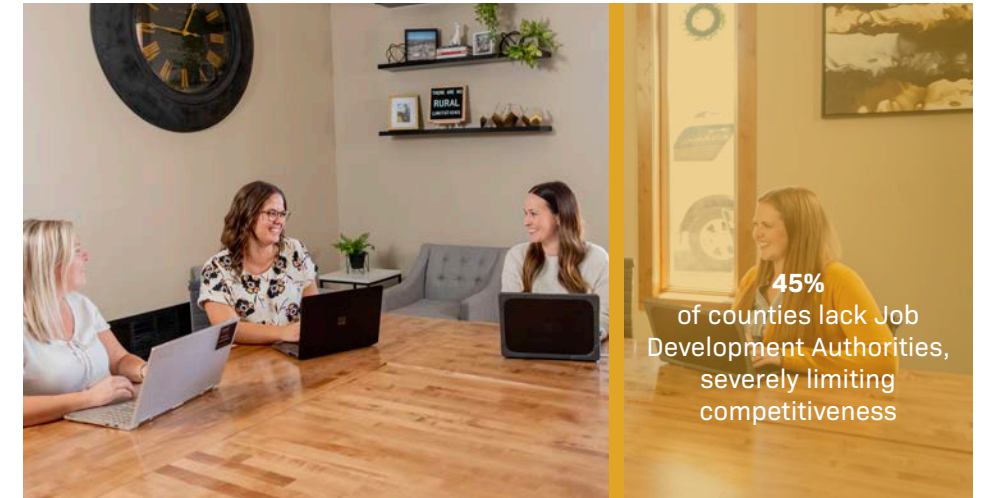
SUPPORT additional resources and financing programs to upgrade and maintain critical infrastructure, ensuring long-term economic growth.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

CAPACITY FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Limited resources and expertise put rural communities at a disadvantage in accessing competitive grants and managing specialized projects.

SUPPORT funding for Regional Councils to provide critical expertise in areas like zoning, business development, grant writing, infrastructure, and communications, allowing small communities to access shared capacity and better implement programs and secure resources.

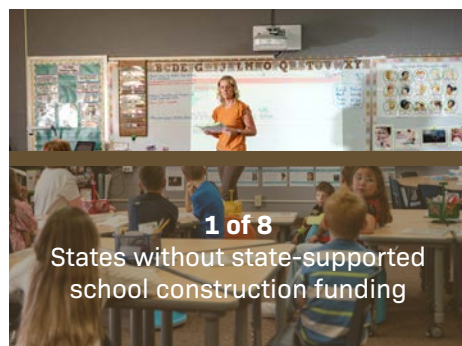


INFRASTRUCTURE

FUND SCHOOL FACILITY UPGRADES

Many rural schools struggle with outdated and aging facilities, including inadequate heating and cooling, impacting learning environments and rural life.

ADVOCATE for state funding to upgrade school facilities, supporting schools as vital hubs of education and community life year-round.



ENHANCE WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Limited water capacity in Southwest North Dakota restricts housing and economic development, with Southwest Water Authority seeking \$115 million in estimated funding needs from 2025-2027.

INCREASE funding to upgrade, replace, and expand rural water infrastructure to support community growth and economic opportunities.



REGIONALIZE AND SIMPLIFY STATE-RUN PROGRAMS

Complex state-run programs often place an undue burden on rural communities, which may lack the resources to meet match requirements or navigate lengthy processes.

ADVOCATE for set-asides and reduced match requirements for rural communities, along with regional disbursement of funds, to ensure equitable access and allow local stakeholders to direct resources effectively to meet local needs.



I see firsthand the resilience and potential of our rural communities. These initiatives are about empowering rural North Dakota to grow, attract talent, and adapt to a rapidly evolving economy. Investing in our people, infrastructure, and industry is essential to ensuring that every community has the opportunity to succeed."

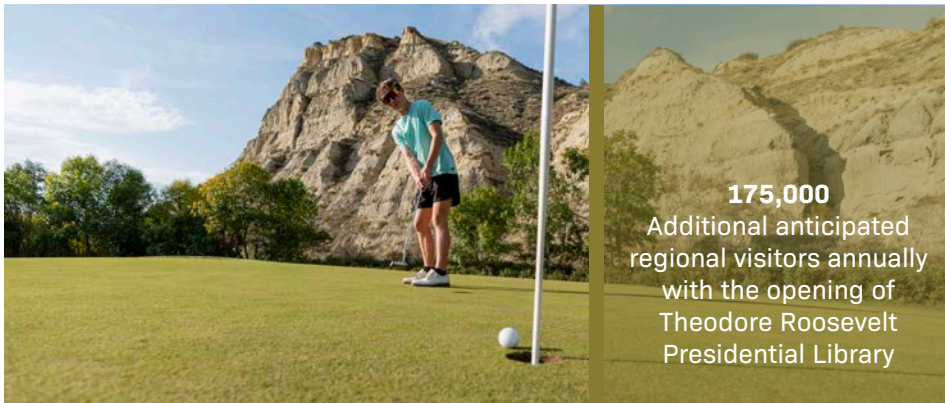
TERAN DOERR
Executive Director
Roosevelt Custer Regional Council

INDUSTRY

EXPAND TOURISM POTENTIAL

Despite the rich cultural and natural attractions Southwest North Dakota offers, limited tourism infrastructure, including hotel accommodations, beautification efforts, and wayfinding systems, restricts the region's ability to fully capitalize on tourism opportunities.

INVEST in Destination Development Funds to support rural tourism initiatives, enhancing community aesthetics, accommodations, and visitor experiences to attract and retain tourists.



ADVANCE AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL FOODS

The agriculture sector faces infrastructure limitations and lacks processing, storage, and workforce capacity to fully leverage opportunities in local foods and livestock production.

SUPPORT targeted programs to spur growth in processing, storage, and local food initiatives, while enhancing value-added agriculture opportunities.



PROMOTE INNOVATION AND EMERGING INDUSTRIES

North Dakota must adapt to remain competitive by advancing automation, innovation, and tapping into emerging industries like hydrogen, CO2 storage, and rare earth minerals.

ENCOURAGE targeted incentives and economic development policies that support automation, entrepreneurship, and emerging technologies, positioning North Dakota for sustained growth.



REGION 8 KEY LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

These legislative priorities have been carefully crafted based on input from area residents and stakeholders, including surveys, public meetings, the first State of Region 8 meeting in February 2024, and subsequent follow-up meetings. These initiatives represent the most pressing needs for Southwest North Dakota as the upcoming legislative session approaches. These priorities aim to address critical gaps in the region's infrastructure, workforce, and economic development to ensure long-term growth and sustainability.



46,868
2020 Population



21,116
Labor Force



1.95%
Regional Unemployment Rate



Roosevelt Custer
REGIONAL COUNCIL