



GPS :: 45 :: 93
YOUR POINT OF OPPORTUNITY.

OPERATING PLAN 2021 :: 2022

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Facilitated by Northspan

OVERVIEW

This operating plan aims to guide the work of GPS 45:93, East Central Minnesota's regional economic development partnership, for the next two years. It builds on the foundations of the 2015 strategic plan and survey work completed in September 2020. It asked respondents to reflect on recent work, establish a current reality, and envision the organization's future. It concludes with a series of action steps that help support each identified priority and strategic direction.

ASPIRATIONS

The survey asked respondents to identify their dreams and aspirations for the future of GPS and what would be different if those dreams come true. The leading responses for each were:

Leading Dreams and Aspirations

- More capacity/resources/members for GPS
- Promote more business retention, expansion, and attraction

Things that Would Be Different if the Dream Came True

- More resources/staff for GPS
- More businesses in GPS region
- More resilient region with long-term thinking (tied)

The responses showed alignment between a belief in the importance of resources and organization capacity, business growth in the region, and the ability of the region to plan for the future. Complete results are available in the appendix.



SWOT

The survey asked respondents to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for GPS. The top two items in each area are:

Strengths

- Collaborative, healthy culture
- Diversity of professional backgrounds and opinions

Weaknesses

- Same people doing most of the work
- Not enough outside awareness of organization
- Not recruiting new people (tied)

Opportunities

- Future growth in rural areas, possibly spurred by pandemic
- Building on existing strong networks

Threats

- Competing regions (including Metro)
- Possible effects of pandemic on budgets

For complete results and further discussion, see the appendix.



OPERATING PLAN 2021-2022

The following operating plan lays out the actions and outcomes in GPS 45:93's 2021-2022-year operating plan. It provides a framework that establishes the work necessary to fulfill its mission, creates a tool for accountability, and helps to establish the scope of services for contracted staff and member volunteers. It simplifies the strategic directions developed in the 2015 strategic plan, draws on feedback on components of that 2015 plan from the survey (available in the appendix), and places the priorities identified in the survey under the relevant strategic direction. For each priority, it provides action steps that guide GPS toward clear outcomes stemming from the topics GPS members noted would be different if their dreams for the organization came true.

Mission
Collaborate to strengthen the regional economy by:

- Providing a regional approach to workforce development, business attraction, retention, and expansion
- Acting as a conduit for members and the region to access resources and educational opportunities

GPS: 45:93
YOUR POINT OF OPPORTUNITY

Duluth

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL

Minneapolis to Duluth
= 154 miles

Strategic Directions

1. Act regionally to support business retention, expansion, and attraction
2. Promote enhancement of regional infrastructure and amenities
3. Provide education and networking opportunities
4. Sustain organizational vitality and communicate the value of GPS 45:93

STRATEGIC DIRECTION



DEFINITION

This strategic direction focuses on efforts to attract new businesses and retain and grow existing businesses in the GPS region. It works to market the GPS region's assets and build a better understanding of businesses and their needs at a regional level.

ACTIONS

1. **Conduct regional marketing for business retention, expansion & attraction**
 - a. Convene at least one annual Fam Tour event (either virtual or in-person)
 - b. Strengthen relationships with economic development partners such as DEED, utilities, and site selectors
 - c. Facilitate member attendance for the Community Venture Network and coordinate regional responses
 - d. Assist member communities with updates to the LOIS property database
 - e. Assess GPS's future with the MIN Marketing Partnership
 - f. Maintain and update GPS promotional brochure and explore digital formats for presentation of its information
2. **Conduct or direct business retention & expansion program efforts**
 - a. Engage businesses in East Central Minnesota through GPS communications, programming, and site visits during monthly meetings
 - b. Continue to assist with the promotion of the East Central Minnesota Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club
 - c. Explore coordination of regional BRE data to further understanding of regional supply chains
 - d. Network with other regional economic development groups to share best practices

OUTCOMES

1. The GPS region will experience business growth.
2. The GPS region will experience increases in wages and local property tax bases.
3. GPS members will gain a stronger understanding of the regional economy.
4. The GPS region will boost its profile as a leader in regional economic development.
5. GPS will support entrepreneurship in the region.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

2

PROMOTE ENHANCEMENT OF REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND AMENITIES

DEFINITION

This strategic direction focuses on the development of regional infrastructure and amenities that are vital for business and population growth. It emphasizes longstanding challenges that benefit from regional cooperation such as broadband, housing, and transportation.

ACTIONS

1. Broadband advocacy & regional cooperation

- a. Continue to facilitate involvement in the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition
- b. Focus on broadband in one monthly meeting per year or host a special event on broadband
- c. Explore regional shared resources available for broadband

2. Advance regional housing solutions

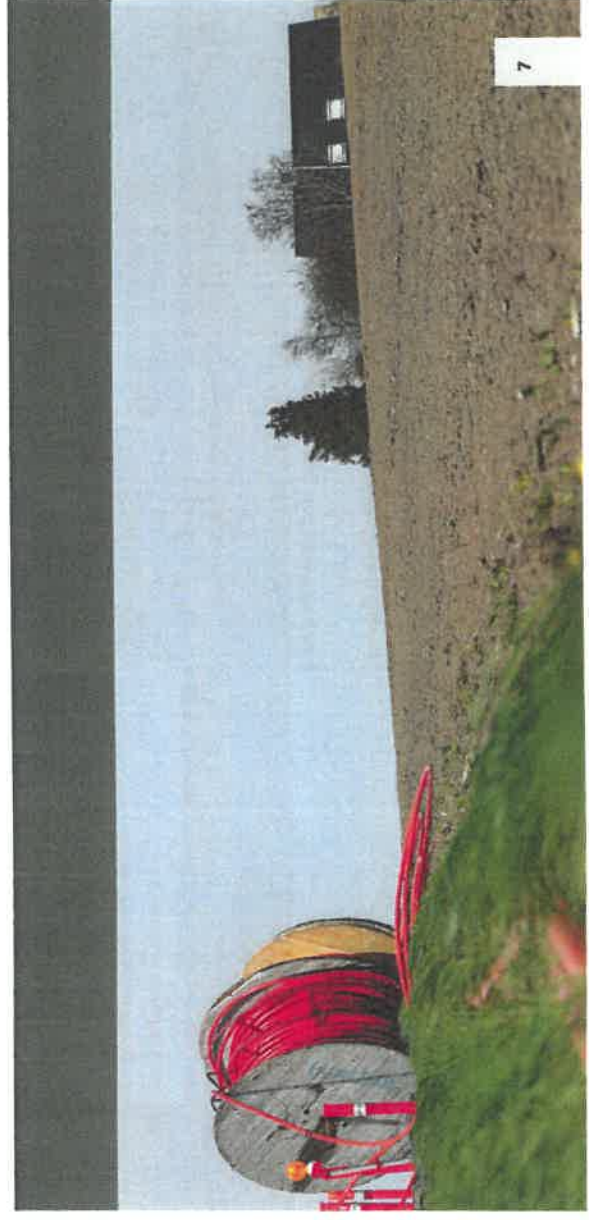
- a. Devote one meeting annually to the regional housing market and explore potential regional housing solutions

3. Focus on/enhance other aspects of regional quality of life

- (transportation and related supply chains, outdoor amenities, tourism)
- a. Explore and support other infrastructure projects of regional importance, including rail, highway, and utility expansions
 - b. Explore new ways to emphasize quality of life in marketing materials

OUTCOMES

1. GPS will achieve stronger rural broadband
2. The GPS region will develop new tools to support housing development.
3. GPS members will work collaboratively to support infrastructure investments that support the region.
4. GPS will emphasize a broad, holistic understanding of economic development that includes quality of life.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

3

PROVIDE EDUCATION AND NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

DEFINITION

This strategic direction builds on GPS's longstanding tradition of creating a space for regional economic development stakeholders to share resources and learn from one another. It also includes opportunities to build awareness among targeted non-member groups and continues the group's previous leadership in workforce development education.

ACTIONS

1. Create education/networking opportunities

- a. Provide meaningful educational and networking opportunities through monthly meetings, the annual meeting, and periodic public, topic-specific events
- b. Facilitate connections and communication with area legislators

2. Focus on/enhance regional workforce collaboration

- a. Host an annual event dedicated to workforce development in the region
- b. Connect workforce stakeholders from across the region to help ensure collaboration and workforce growth and preparation based on industry need
- c. Facilitate regional connections between school districts and higher education

OUTCOMES

1. GPS members believe they have a strong regional support network.
2. GPS will continue to be a leader in building awareness and understanding of innovative approaches to workforce development.
3. GPS members will have the opportunity to serve as or learn from mentors in their fields.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

4

SUSTAIN ORGANIZATIONAL VITALITY AND COMMUNICATE THE VALUE OF GPS 45-93

DEFINITION

This strategic direction focuses on GPS's internal capacity to support its operations. It seeks to sustain and grow funding, retain contracted staff, communicate GPS's value to members and the entire region, and provide resources for members.

ACTIONS

1. Focus on organizational sustainability and growth

- a. Develop annual list of new members to target for recruitment
- b. Address legal and fiduciary responsibilities as a non-profit organization
- c. Revisit committee membership at the start of each year to ensure broad participation
- d. Retain contracted staff to complete elements of the scope of work

2. Enhance communications and engagement strategy

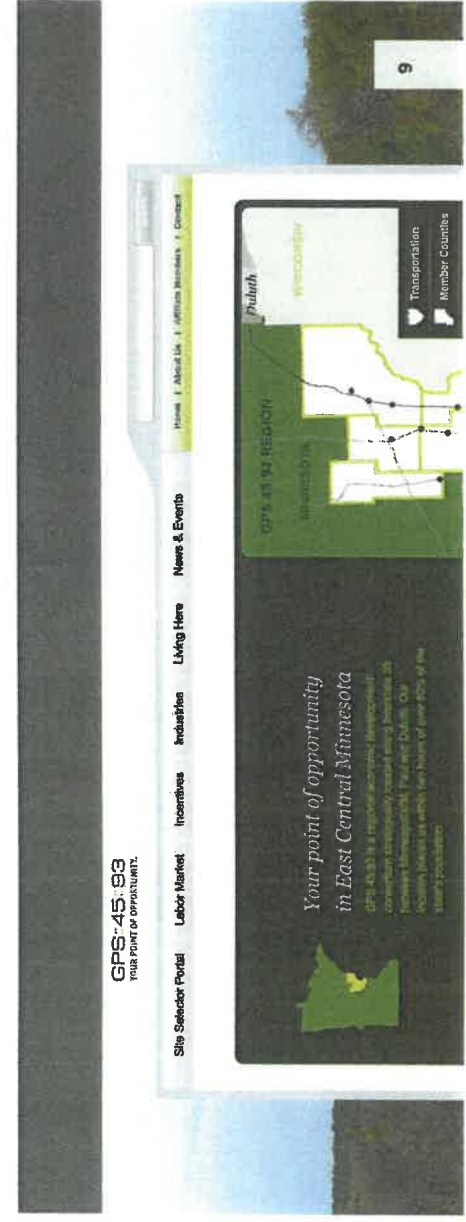
- a. Revisit and thoroughly implement communications and engagement strategy
- b. Distribute a quarterly newsletter
- c. Create and distribute the annual highlights and value of belonging documents
- d. Find new venues to share successes and raise GPS's profile such as presentations at conferences

3. Enhance business & financial resources on website

- a. Update website when necessary and explore ways to better present regional business resources

OUTCOMES

1. GPS will obtain more resources to support increased programming and capacity.
2. GPS will continue to operate stably.
3. GPS will have broad participation from its members.
4. GPS will more effectively communicate its value and offerings.
5. Area businesses and residents will be able to find valuable resources on the GPS website.



CONSULTANT SCOPE OF SERVICES

This section takes the actions listed above and adds responsible parties to identify the scope of work for the GPS consultant, administrative consultant, and members.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, PRIORITIES, AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE
<p>SD1. Act regionally to support business retention, expansion, and attraction</p> <p>1. Conduct regional marketing for business retention, expansion & attraction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Convene at least one annual Fam Tour event (either virtual or in-person) b. Strengthen relationships with economic development partners such as DEED, utilities, and site selectors c. Facilitate member attendance for the Community Venture Network and coordinate regional responses d. Assist member communities with updates to the LOIS property database e. Assess GPS's future with the MN Marketing Partnership f. Maintain and update GPS promotional brochure and explore digital formats for presentation of its information <p>2. Conduct or direct business retention & expansion program efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engage businesses in East Central Minnesota through GPS communications, programming, and site visits during monthly meetings b. Continue to assist with the promotion of the East Central Minnesota Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club c. Explore coordination of regional BRE data to further understanding of regional supply chains d. Network with other regional economic development groups to share best practices 	<p>Consultant and marketing committee</p> <p>Consultant and marketing committee</p> <p>Attendance coordination – administrative consultant Regional response – consultant</p> <p>Both consultants</p> <p>Executive committee</p> <p>Consultant and marketing committee</p> <p>Consultant and marketing committee</p> <p>Marketing committee</p> <p>Consultant</p> <p>Consultant</p>

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, PRIORITIES, AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE
<p>SD2. Promote enhancement of regional infrastructure and amenities</p> <p>1. Broadband advocacy & regional cooperation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to facilitate involvement in the Minnesota Rural Broadband Coalition b. Focus on broadband in one monthly meeting per year or host a special event on broadband c. Explore regional shared resources available for broadband <p>2. Advance regional housing solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Devote one meeting annually to the regional housing market and explore potential regional housing solutions <p>3. Focus on/enhance other aspects of regional quality of life (transportation and related supply chains, outdoor amenities, tourism)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Explore and support other infrastructure projects of regional importance, including rail, highway, and utility expansions b. Explore new ways to emphasize quality of life in marketing materials 	<p>Broadband committee</p> <p>Broadband and executive committees</p> <p>Broadband committee</p> <p>Consultant and executive committees</p> <p>Consultant and members involved in projects</p> <p>Consultant and marketing committee</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, PRIORITIES, AND ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE
<p>SD3. Provide education and networking opportunities</p> <p>1. Create education/networking opportunities</p> <p>a. Provide meaningful educational and networking opportunities through monthly meetings, the annual meeting, and periodic public, topic-specific events</p> <p>b. Facilitate connections and communication with area legislators</p> <p>2. Focus on/enhance regional workforce collaboration</p> <p>a. Host an annual event dedicated to workforce development in the region</p> <p>b. Connect workforce stakeholders from across the region to help ensure collaboration and workforce growth and preparation based on industry need</p> <p>c. Facilitate regional connections between school districts and higher education</p>	<p>Executive committee, relevant committees, consultants</p> <p>Executive committee, consultants</p> <p>Workforce committee and consultant</p> <p>Workforce committee</p> <p>Workforce committee</p>



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS, PRIORITIES, AND ACTIONS

RESPONSIBLE

SD4. Sustain organizational vitality and communicate the value of GPS 45:93

1. Focus on organizational sustainability and growth

- a. Develop annual list of new members to target for recruitment
- b. Address legal and fiduciary responsibilities as a non-profit organization
- c. Revisit committee membership at the start of each year to ensure broad participation
- d. Retain contracted staff to complete elements of the scope of work

Consultant and marketing committee
 Administrative consultant and executive committee
 Consultant and committees
 Executive committee

2. Enhance communications and engagement strategy

- a. Revisit and thoroughly implement communications and engagement strategy

Consultant

- b. Distribute a quarterly newsletter

Consultant and administrative consultant with relevant members

- c. Create and distribute the annual highlights and value of belonging documents

Executive committee with both consultants

- d. Find new venues to share successes and raise GPS's profile such as presentations at conferences

Consultant

3. Enhance business & financial resources on website

- a. Update website when necessary and explore ways to better present regional business resources

Both consultants