

CONAC REAP Zone 2004 Annual Report

Executive Summary:

The CONAC REAP Zone has been very involved in several activities over the past year. The zone continues to be busy implementing its strategic and information technology plans.

Many projects have been endorsed and funded, as the entire zone is moving towards the goals stated in the plans.

CONAC continues to move forward with an active board and maintains its existing partnerships with the REAP Investment Board, Champion/REAP Alliance, regional councils, Rural Development and other agencies.

Looking forward, CONAC will be focusing on developing a system for establishing additional government procurement opportunities and a tourism plan for the zone.

Most Significant Accomplishment:

The most significant accomplishment for CONAC was the participation in the purchase of TechLink. TechLink is a for-profit data entry company that is projected to provide a source of on-going revenue to the zones in years to come.

Many projects were endorsed and funded within the zone relating to the strategic and information technology plans. Each project is a stepping-stone towards the goals of the zone. The projects for 2004 and how they relate to the strategic plan follow:

Goal 1 Identify and Encourage Leadership in our Communities

Objective #1 Conduct training in community leadership

- The Champion REAP Alliance is working with the Leadership ND program.
- Endorsed and funded St. Anne's Strategic Plan

Goal #2 Create networks with partnering organizations

Objective #1 Coordinate and make more accessible the resources available inside and outside the CONAC region.

- Websites are being maintained for conac.org and ndalliancelink.com
- Bizpathways was endorsed, funded and online.
- Endorsed and funded REAP/Champion Rural Empowerment

Goal #3 Assist CONAC communities in their efforts to enhance quality of life.

Obj. #1 Endorse community efforts to address housing needs.

- Endorsed several housing projects including; Courtyard Apartments, Turtle Mountain Housing Preservation Grant, Spirit Lake Housing Preservation Grant
- Funded Courtyard Apartments, St. John Housing, Moeller Homes, Turtle Mountain Assisted Living Facility for Adults with Developmental Disabilities, Lansford Apartments

Obj. #2 Implement priority actions addressed in the 2002 IT Plan

- Endorsed and Funded Maddock Memorial Home
- Endorsed and funded Presentation Medical Center
- Endorsed and funded Growing Technology in Towner County Businesses
- Endorsed and funded AgrilmaGIS

Obj. #3 Identify and implement young people retention and attraction strategies

- Relocated the Youth Entrepreneurship project to Rugby
- Endorsed and Funded Junior Robotics
- Endorsed and funded Rolla Community Daycare
- Endorsed and funded Career Exploration in Environmental Technology
- Endorsed and funded Youth Tech Summit

Obj. #4 Explore the possibilities for more health care collaboration inside and outside the CONAC region.

- Endorsed and funded Prairieland Home Healthcare
- Endorsed and funded Heart of America Wellness Center
- Endorsed and funded Electronic Health Record

Obj. #5 Assist communities in developing water systems and other infrastructure projects needed to improve the quality of life and attract new residents and businesses.

- Endorsed and funded Velva Water and Sewer
- Endorsed and funded Lion's Park Renovation
- Endorsed and funded St. John Industrial Park
- Endorsed NCRWC Phase II-Community Arsenic Compliance Project

Obj. #6 Encourage and endorse life long learning opportunities throughout the CONAC region.

- Endorsed and funded Prairie Commons Center for Women
- Endorsed and funded Workforce Training/Nursing Program
- Endorsed and funded Village Arts Roof Repair
- Endorsed and funded Building the Virtual American Dream
- Endorsed and funded MSU-Bottineau-Entrepreneurial Center for Horticulture

Goal #4 Increase the diversity and quality of economic opportunities in our region.

Obj. #1 Maximize the utilization of the capital fund for the CONAC region.

Obj. #2 Recognize tourism as the second leading industry in ND

- Endorsed and funded Turtle Mountain Association RV Rally Trip

Obj. #3 Encourage retention, expansion and start-up of entrepreneurial businesses.

- Endorsed the BTR Elevator
- Endorsed and funded North Central Correction and Rehab Center
- Endorsed and funded Star City Lanes in Velva
- Endorsed and funded Sheyenne Valley Marketing
- Provided funds towards the purchase of TechLink
- Endorsed and funded Rugby Renaissance Zone Plan
- Endorsed and funded North Dakota Business Outreach Program
- Endorsed and funded Granville Café
- Endorsed and funded Golden Spoke
- Endorsed and funded Bead Unique
- R&D
 - AgriSafe Livestock Odor Management Demonstration
 - Maddock Enterprise Team
 - Central Dakota Beef
 - Jackalope Conversions
 - Deva Lifewear
 - The Guardian-Antler Creek Specialties
 - Microlap Technologies
 - NASA Spirit Lake CDC
 - Tenderfoot Socks
 - Country Cuisine
- REAP RLF
 - Valley Specialty Foods
 - Deva Lifewear
 - Southend R&R
 - TK's Jack and Jill
 - Schepp's Dakota Deli

Goal #5 Champion Homesteading Strategies

Obj. #1 Attract international investment to local businesses.

Community Participation:

CONAC covers six north central counties in North Dakota, which includes two Indian reservations. Each, of these entities, is represented on the CONAC REAP Zone board with two seats equaling sixteen members plus an at-large member. These counties and reservations all had input in the development of the Zone's Strategic and Information Technology Strategic Plans. Updates of the plans have been conducted with CONAC board members and advisors. CONAC continues to publish photos of check presentations to give public notification of the zone and funding available.

A formal brochure has been designed to enhance marketing of the zone as well as a bound board member packet which gives board members information on everything from

REAP Zone history, current members and technical advisors, benchmark procedure, fund guidelines and equity fund information.

Partnerships and Alliances:

CONAC continues its relationships with a number of entities. CONAC is a partner in the REAP Investment Board and belongs to the Champion/REAP Alliance. CONAC also works closely with the Souris Basin and North Central Regional Planning Councils, Rural Development, local economic development groups, ND State agencies, local legislative representatives, private companies and individuals.

Problems/Obstacles:

A huge factor in the future of the REAP Zone is the potential of lack of Federal funding. The CONAC Zone has received over \$4million dollars to date and has made some wise investments in good projects. However, the zone has the reputation of being a good place to request money from, as it understands the risk associated with new concepts or ideas. This being the case, once Federal funds cease coming into the zone, projects of the nature funded by the zone, will not have a source of seed capital.

A second problem within the REAP Zone is the large learning curve associated with being a board member or new advisor. The time it takes to learn the programs, funding guidelines and benchmark procedures can be daunting for new members as well as providing benchmark updates on projects that may be unfamiliar to the member.

Solutions:

Sustainability has long been an issue with the zone. The purchase of TechLink should provide a source of income in the future.

The CONAC REAP board members receive a bound director handbook and a meeting is held between the regional council advisor and the new member to go through the history, current programs, and funding guidelines and benchmark procedure.

Best Practices:

CONAC has adopted formal guidelines for both funding categories and benchmark criteria. This has given both members and applicants a better understanding of the potential uses and limitations of the funds as well as criteria to use in evaluating benchmarks.

Plans/Prospects for the Future:

CONAC will be focusing on government outsourcing and procurement as a way to generate additional investment into the CONAC region as well as complete a tourism plan for the zone.

TechLink is expected to expand into the REAP Zone which will provide both a source of income for the zone as well as a direct benefit of creating employment opportunities in the zone, directly benefiting the local economies.

CONAC will continue to implement the items in its strategic plan and IT strategic plan.