

# Q1 2025 Newsletter

## Letter from the President



IEDC launched into 2025 with energy and purpose through *Sparking Change: Diversifying Our Regional Economy*. This signature event marked the culmination of nearly a year of work in 2024, summarizing the efforts of our task force and the voices of our community gathered through extensive engagement. With the support of our dedicated planning committee, we welcomed speakers from across the country who helped shine a light on the unique challenges—and exciting opportunities—facing rural areas like ours.

The event sparked meaningful conversations and brought together a wide range of community members and partners, all eager to reimagine what innovation and economic opportunity could look like in our region. We are using this momentum to guide our 2025 work plan, though we are experiencing a brief delay as funding from the Department of Energy remains under review. That said, we fully expect to move forward in the second quarter and are ready to hit the ground running with many of the strategic actions outlined in our report.

Beyond the event, our team continues to provide thoughtful, hands-on consulting for our growing network of small business clients. We're also proud to be offering direct services to several Itasca communities—launching grant and loan programs and laying strong foundations for lasting economic development, especially in our smallest towns.

2025 is already shaping up to be a dynamic and impactful year. We invite you to visit us at *The Forge* to learn more about what's ahead—and to find out how you can be part of the journey.

**The first quarter of 2025** was marked by high-impact outcomes and strong client engagement across the region. We supported 83 unique clients, delivered 269.5 consulting hours, facilitated \$675,000 in capital investment, and helped create or retain 154 jobs. This included 36 new client registrations and one new/acquired business start.

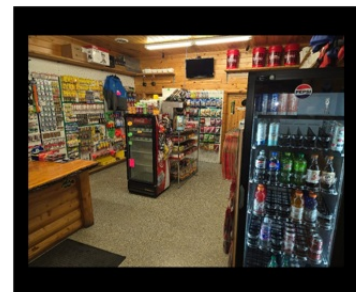
We also delivered two business education seminars:

- **Income & Expense Tracking for Small Businesses**, which equipped participants with a practical spreadsheet tool to manage finances and prepare for tax season.
- **How to Start Your Business in Minnesota**, a comprehensive session guiding aspiring entrepreneurs through local registration, compliance, and licensing requirements.

## Client Highlights

### **The Great Outdoors Bottle Shop and Bait** **Pengilly, MN**

Family-owned, this unique retailer offers a blend of liquor sales and bait supplies. With SBDC support, they are pursuing an expansion into takeout pizza service. Our team helped evaluate feasibility, navigate licensing and operational integration, develop cost projections, and refine the business plan and marketing strategy. From regulatory compliance to sourcing ingredients and pricing strategy, we've worked closely to ensure the expansion is sustainable and ready to serve a growing customer base.



### **Beier's Greenhouse**

#### **Grand Rapids, MN**

A community staple for over 60 years, Beier's Greenhouse is transitioning to new ownership by a longtime employee, who is in the process of purchasing the business. We've assisted with business planning, financial projections, and

income/expense tracking to facilitate a smooth transition. Our support also includes marketing strategy and digital engagement to continue growing the business.



## Twisted Sisters Pretzel Company

Itasca County, MN

Founded by two sisters, Twisted Sisters Pretzel Co. brings fresh, homemade pretzels to the local food scene. With our help, the duo developed a business plan, created a sales strategy, and secured startup projections and financing. They are now booking events and preparing to launch with continued SBDC support as they scale.

*TWISTED SISTERS*  
Pretzel Co.  
"Our Twist on Tradition"



## Momentum into Q2

With dozens of client projects underway, we are entering Q2 focused on:

- **Capital Access and Lending Readiness**
- **Succession Planning, Expansion, and Community Investment**
- **Refining Client Tools and Enhancing Advisor Efficiency**

Our team is committed to helping local entrepreneurs solve real problems, build stronger businesses, and keep our regional economy growing. When our clients win, the whole region wins.

DATE	NEW CLIENTS REGISTERED	NEW CLIENT MEETINGS	NEW BUSINESS EST.	UNIQUE CLIENTS COUNSELED	HOURS OF CONSULTING	JOBS, CREATED & RETAINED	CAPITAL RAISED
2025 YTD	20	20	1	72	170.25	154	\$ 675,000
2024 YTD	23	18	2	60	97	51	\$ 155
2025 Feb	10	10	0	37	73.5	43	\$ -
2024 Feb	14	10	1	27	65	38	\$ 155
2024	130	125	14	203	754	266	\$ 3,237,050
2023	127	104	21	181	632	341	\$ 3,091,608
2022	92	94	11	180	660	232	\$ 5,115,887
2021	92	87	7	201	377	190	\$ 3,625,794
2020	61	61	6	213	468	392	\$ 5,369,704
2019	19	53	7	147	305	123	N/A

## The Forge

The Forge had an excellent start to 2025! In Q1, we saw a range of engineering, metalworking, and even murder mystery event projects progress, and got to watch students develop their skills through the MN North College welding diplomacy class.

Our partnership with MN North College has been a huge success. The college's 33-credit welding diplomacy class, which started at the beginning of Q1 and wrapped this week, hosted 5 students focused on advancing their welding skills and knowledge. Next fall, MN North will expand the class size to accommodate at least 12 people, and as the semesters progress, they expect to attract diverse age groups looking to progress their skills. Throughout the summer, The Forge will work with our partners to host a variety of welding sessions, including high school classes and an EMPOWER camp for women.

### **Spaces Available at The Forge:**

- 1,000 sq. ft. space
- 2,800 sq. ft. space
- Multiple rental spaces available for half and full days (15-40 person capacity)

### **On the Horizon:**

- We'll be upgrading our ventilation system to ensure our space continues to meet the needs of all occupants and accommodate the larger number of students for next year's welding diplomacy class.
- The Forge is now an Arrowhead Manufacturing Association (AMFA) member! We look forward to working with the education committee to expand our reach and strengthen our support and partnerships.
- We're continuing to strengthen our partnership with NEXT Career Pathways, and we look forward to helping them further their high school internship program and seminars.

As we move forward in 2025, the team at The Forge is eager to continue upgrading our space and collaborating with tenants and local partners to meet the needs of Itasca County entrepreneurs and innovators.

## Sparking Change

On February 5 and 6, IEDC hosted *Sparking Change: Diversifying Our Regional Economy*. The two-day event at the Timberlake Lodge in Grand Rapids focused on building a shared understanding of the impending energy transition, rural development challenges, and collaborating around planned and potential



opportunities for economic and community development. The event was free and attracted over 120 registrants across two days. You can view and download all presentation materials from the event [here](#).

The event included the unveiling of a new report and action plan put together by the Sparking Change task force. The report is designed to:

- Communicate the story of greater Northern Minnesota to community members, decision-makers, and funders at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Serve as a platform to take advantage of new funding opportunities for economic diversification work.
- Guide ongoing action and partnerships.

You can download the report [here](#). Looking ahead, a lack of federal funding has slowed IEDC and the task force's work in this area. More events and opportunities to engage will become available once funding accelerates.

[DOWNLOAD THE REPORT](#)

## Funding Partner Update: Nelson Wood Shims



**“The team at IEDC is fighting the good fight. They have a constant grind, they’re faced with a lot of challenges and roadblocks, but they don’t slow down. They’re the unifying force, and they continue putting in the vital work to improve our region.” - Brian Peterson**

We sat down with Brian Peterson, President and CEO at Nelson Wood Shims, to learn more about his involvement as an IEDC funding partner.

### **Thanks for joining us, Brian! Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?**

I was born and raised in Itasca County. My wife and I are high school sweethearts, and after living in the cities for a few years, we decided to move back to the Grand Rapids area. I found a role with Nelson Wood Shims about 18 years ago and have been there ever since, and it’s been incredible to watch our product lines, company, and community as a whole grow.

### **Why is Nelson Shims a member of IEDC?**

There’s a dual, mutually-beneficial relationship between IEDC and its members. We want to support and participate in our community, provide good jobs for our people, and have a pool of good workers to fill jobs and support our process. The more we

support economic development for the county, the more we can attract good workers and strengthen our workforce. And the more we strengthen our workforce, the more we can support the community around us.

### **What does your involvement with IEDC look like?**

We try to participate in forums and events as often as we can. Whenever something big comes up at our company or in our community, we wrap IEDC in as quickly as possible because we know they can help us sort through opportunities, funding, and planning. They're a great resource on many levels.

I also had the opportunity to join the Sparking Change task force. IEDC has put a lot of work into that initiative, and I'm excited to see how it comes to fruition!

### **What are some promising opportunities you see for the region in the coming years?**

One of Itasca County's greatest assets is the ingenuity and can-do attitude of our workers. They're not afraid to tackle new problems, jump in, and get to work. They're a huge backbone of our community, and they're going to be the most important piece of the puzzle as we try to strengthen our workforce in future years.

I also see a lot of opportunities in our lumber industry that we could capitalize on. We have a strong, well-managed lumber industry and a great workforce, and if we focus our efforts in that space, it could bring a lot of exciting benefits and opportunities for Itasca County.

## **Events**

The Forge looks forward to hosting training opportunities for high school students and community members this summer. Hone your skills at one of the following camps:

- EMPOWER Camp: June 9-12
- Welding Camp: June 23-25
- Manufacturing Camp: June 30-July 2



**IEDC creates and retains quality jobs in Itasca County through education,**

**research, and connections with businesses.**

Every day, its staff works to expand its diverse economy and show why we've come to call Itasca County home. We're here to help grow small businesses of all sizes, strengthen our workforce, and build partnerships that strengthen our whole region.



Itasca Economic Development Corporation | 12 NW 3rd St | Grand Rapids, MN 55744 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email & social marketing for free!