



GROW
Cedar Valley
Business. Community. *Opportunity*

Annual Report

2019

(July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019)

Message from Grow Cedar Valley Leadership

Thank you for making FY2019 a great year! It also marks the 15-year anniversary of the creation of the organization focused on Cedar Valley-wide community and economic development, formerly known as the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance & Chamber.

It has been a year of positive change and forward trajectory. We started the year with a re-focused mission, vision and goals, as well as the appointment of our new President & CEO, Cary Darrah. By the end of the year, we launched a new name that truly reflects the core of our work – Grow Cedar Valley.



Eric Johnson
Board Chair 2018-2019



Cary Darrah
President & CEO

Because of your input and support, the Cedar Valley is moving in the right direction. At Grow Cedar Valley, we listen to and respond to the needs of our investors – you and your business. While every story is unique, the needs of the business community are consistent: increase the talent supply, improve the community image, create more jobs at a livable wage or above, and ensure opportunities for all to participate in the economy.

While that list is daunting, we are committed to moving the needle and are making progress. There are still barriers to overcome, but we truly believe the Cedar Valley is a special and unique place where business and community come together for the greater good. We are proud to be part of those collaborations, and this annual report highlights our progress and accomplishments over the past year that we know are only made possible by you. Thank you!

Congratulations on investing in the future of your Cedar Valley! Grow Cedar Valley is your community organization, and together we strive toward the best future possible for our businesses and community. This annual report not only features our highlights of this past year, but also looks forward with our goals and vision for the upcoming year. So much progress has already been made, but we know there is still a lot of work to do and we can't do it alone. We invite you to reach out to the staff or members of the Board anytime with your feedback, thoughts, or to find out how to be more involved. Together we can grow the Cedar Valley!



Bryan Earnest
Board Chair 2019-2020

Business.

Focused on connecting businesses with the resources they need to grow and contribute to healthy communities and a strong, diversified economy. Your ability to grow ensures prosperity for your business while spurring the spending power of the people who live here, which in turn impacts all aspects of community life. Together we can create a healthy climate for both business and community growth.

FY2019 Economic Development Projects

► TOTALS



External Marketing

29

External Prospect Proposals/Information Sent to Leads
(includes follow-ups with additional information)

6

External Prospect Visits

Existing Business Support

29

Responses to Assistance Request

35

Business Visits

MOVING FORWARD

A thriving economy and community are only possible with a strong and growing business sector. To support that growth, here are some of our new or expanded economic development initiatives for FY2020.

- **Start-Up Support**
Grow Cedar Valley connects entrepreneurs to other businesses through Red Cedar. Innovative events such as Cedar Valley Startup Week, TechBrew and One Million Cups allow for us to support entrepreneurs and new businesses.
- **Economic Development Council**
Grow Cedar Valley will establish an Economic Development Council to provide strategic direction and support for our economic development initiatives.
- **Existing Business Report**
To get an accurate pulse of our business community, Grow Cedar Valley will conduct existing business in-person interviews. The findings will be published in aggregate, and will be used to guide programming and focus our advocacy efforts for our existing businesses.
- **International Market Growth**
To increase opportunities for international business locations, we will represent the Cedar Valley at the U.S. Department of Commerce's Foreign Direct Investment Conference and meet with international companies looking at expanding to the U.S.

Community.

The Cedar Valley has lots to celebrate, from the development of one hundred-million dollar entertainment projects to the renovation and continued growth of high school career placement programming. The Cedar Valley community is a place to brag about, and we're doing just that.

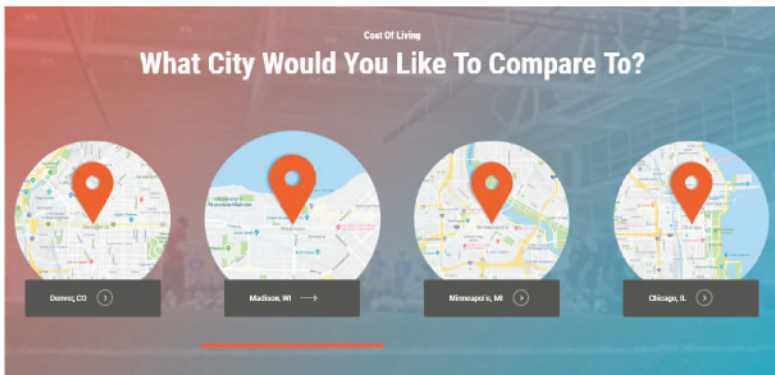


What is Live the Valley?

Live the Valley is *your* all-in-one talent attraction and retention tool.

In a job seekers market, talent recruitment goes beyond the job description and company culture. Live the Valley is an online movement that celebrates the great opportunities and countless activities to enjoy in the Cedar Valley. Over a million people have been reached, leading to hundreds of talent leads.

Cost of Living Calculator



This interactive tool compares the cost of living in the Cedar Valley to many communities across the country, allowing potential talent to explore the affordable yet great lifestyle available in the Cedar Valley.

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The first thing candidates ask about with relocation is what it is actually like to live in the Cedar Valley. The ability to show and sell them on the community is a challenge when they are coming from big cities or the coasts. Life in Iowa is great but much different. Grow Cedar Valley has helped us tell the story.

- Erik Skovgard
President & CEO
Lincoln Savings Bank

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MOVING FORWARD

Talent is the number one asset for your business. At Grow Cedar Valley, we are focused on innovative ways to bring talent to your door with these new tools planned for FY2020.

► Cedar Valley Virtual Reality Experience

Our new virtual reality community tour will be used to demonstrate what life looks like in the Cedar Valley! The tour showcases experiences on the bike trails, downtowns, and recreation to the prospective talent your business needs.

► Cedar Valley Welcome Kits

Your business will have access to our new Cedar Valley Welcome Kits to give to new or potential employees. The kits feature targeted community information and Cedar Valley swag in a custom-printed *Live the Valley* box.

Opportunity

The Cedar Valley is full of opportunities! We believe that the opportunity to secure employment at a livable wage and participate in the economy should be available to **all** who choose it. As representatives of the business community, we understand that employers play a vital role in creating that opportunity.

Economic Inclusion Partnership

The Economic Inclusion Partnership was created to provide employers with the education, tools and resources needed to operate with Economic Inclusion excellence. This year, the Partnership created the following subcommittee working teams to further increase focus and effectiveness:

- ▶ Champions Team.
- ▶ Working Team.
- ▶ Event Programming Team.

Economic Inclusion Education

Over 370 Cedar Valley employers, educators, and community members attended the first annual Economic Inclusion joint conference between the University of Northern Iowa and Grow Cedar Valley in October 2018. Keynote speaker Dr. Nika White, national consultant and author, challenged attendees to create an inclusive Cedar Valley, which has sparked ongoing conversations with inclusion champions in the Cedar Valley.



MOVING FORWARD

We are excited about the momentum going into FY2020. We are focused on reducing and eliminating barriers to employment through collaborations with community organizations, businesses, and legislative leadership. The collaborations already built and those in the beginning stages are signs of progress. Below is a highlight of new programming planned for FY2020.

▶ First Friday Meetups

Grow Cedar Valley will begin hosting these nationally recognized networking events optimized for the African American Community and other diversity groups. Cedar Valley employers will be invited to attend these meetups to link talent with employment.

▶ Women in Leadership

This year, we will be hosting the Cedar Valley's first annual Leadercast Women simulcast. This event features a cast of all-female speakers sharing inspiration and stories of leadership. Grow Cedar Valley will also convene a working group to focus on bringing additional development and networking opportunities for professional women.

▶ Cedar Valley Employer Toolkit

Your business will soon have a toolkit to help attract and retain talent. Information on training, recruiting/retention, salary data, and economic inclusion best practices will all be included. This toolkit is intended to be an extension of your HR team!

Grow Cedar Valley Staff



Cary Darrah
President & CEO



Steve Firman
Director of Government Affairs



Will Frost
Director of Talent Development



Aubree Green
Communications Specialist



Wes James
President of TechWorks Campus



Aaron Jarnagin
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Dr. Melissa Reade
Director of Leader Valley



Jim Schaefer
Director of Investor Relations



Kim Schleisman
Business Manager



Lisa Rivera Skubal, CEcD
Vice President of Economic Development



Sandi Sommerfelt
Vice President of Operations



Teri Trask
Leader Valley Facilitator & Coach



Molly Wells
Special Projects Coordinator



Bette Wubbena
Events Director

Not pictured: Rebecca Anaweer (custodian) and Jim Anfinson (custodian)

GrowCedarValley.com

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