

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

7riversalliance.org

2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee

Michael Richards, President,
Gundersen Health Systems

Lee Rasch, Past President,
Western Technical College

Dorothy Duran, Vice President,
Minnesota State College SE

Brian Fukuda, Secretary,
La Crosse County

Clinton Torp, Treasurer,
La Crosse Regional Airport

Board Members

Kyle Bakkum,
Vernon Memorial Healthcare

Joe Gow,
UW - La Crosse

Mike Herro,
Xcel Energy

Brian Rotty,
Mayo Clinic Health System

Wendy Mihm-Herold,
NE Iowa Community College

Joyce Iverson,
Rushford Institute for Nano Technology

Cecil Wright,
Maple Valley Cooperative

Rich Mikurt,
Mikurt Properties

Mark Pfeiffer,
CROPP/Organic Valley

Terry Pickett,
Ingersoll Rand/TRANE

Craig Porter,
PlastiCert

Terry Whipple,
Juneau County Economic Development

Brent Smith,
Johns, Flaherty, & Collins, SC.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Investors and Members:

The past year has been one of the best for the 7 Rivers Alliance. Through our programming, we reached more people than ever before and have brought topics to you that have ranged from sustaining local grocery stores to looking at best practices for regional workforce housing. This year was also our first ever Rising Stars Under 40 awards, which we presented to 19 great leaders in the Tri-State area. These leaders have inspiring stories and experiences that will shape our region for years to come.



We also announced significant funding for a 10-year regional workforce study, the first of its kind in our region. This study will be looking at our workforce through a new lens, while also focusing on workforce housing, transportation, and child care. No matter what state you live in or the population base of your city, workforce is going to be key to growing - and maintaining - your operations. We believe that this plan is going to provide certainty for the future and opportunities that we as a region can unite behind so that we can compete in the next generation of this global economy.

Thank you for investing in the 7 Rivers Alliance. We look forward to reaching new heights together.

Sincerely,

Michael Richards
President

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Dear Investors and Members,

2016 was an exciting year for the Alliance as we expanded our programs and services throughout the region. All of our efforts would not have been possible without strong partnerships with our local economic development professionals and chamber of commerce executives. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you to bring resources to the region.



We also had tremendous support from our Board of Directors and regional leaders. Thank you for your dedication to advancing our region and your guidance as we plan for the future. We have an exciting schedule for 2017 and I look forward to working with you to increase the economic vitality of our region.

All the best,

Lisa Herr
CEO



MISSION

The 7 Rivers Alliance brings together public and private resources to forge entrepreneurial growth and serves as a clearinghouse of vital information to enhance quality of life in Southwest Wisconsin, Southeast Minnesota, and Northeast Iowa.

Purpose: To support and advance the economic vitality of the 7 Rivers Region

Value: We improve coordination of support services to businesses and communities

2017 - 2020 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Spearhead Regional Collaboration

- Articulate our role in economic development
- Advocate for regional partnerships
- Aggressively market the region
- Coordinate the development of a regional economic growth strategy

Implement the WISE Plan

- Schedule executive briefings to present final plan
- Lead regional planning for secure implementation funding

Improve the Alliance's Financial Sustainability

- Expand financial support
- Increase the cost-effectiveness of Alliance sponsored events
- Pursue financial support from grants, consortiums, associations, and partnerships

OUR PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION

Equity - We support economic opportunity and high quality of life for people of all backgrounds and skill levels.

Collaboration - Our economies and assets transcend physical borders and boundaries. Our ability to compete globally is dependent upon our ability to collaborate locally as a region.

Cooperation - We advocate for cooperative intergovernmental strategies that maintain regional business development initiatives and improve the overall efficiency of municipal services throughout the seven rivers region.

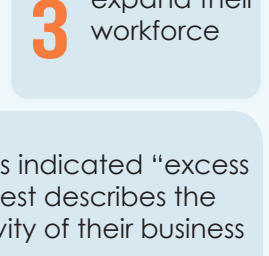
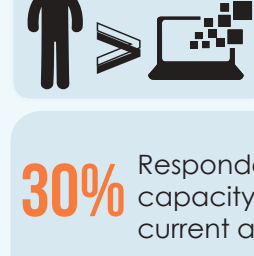
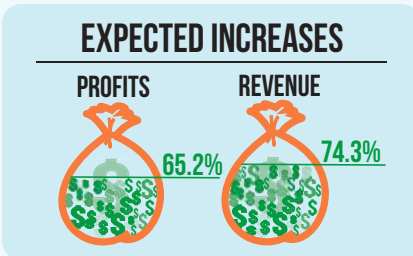
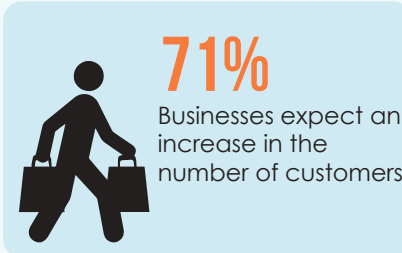
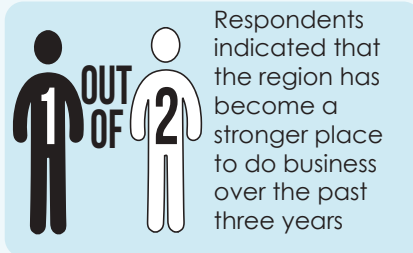
Stewardship - Our preservation of physical assets, infrastructure and natural resources is critical as they are inextricably linked to quality of life. Economic prosperity means a high quality of life and quality of life fosters economic prosperity.

Celebration - We identify, celebrate, and market the unique assets of all counties and communities within the region. We recognize that the promotion of our region is a competitive advantage for attracting business and new resources into the region.

2016 BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS

The 2016 Executive Business Survey was conducted between April 4th and August 1st, 2016. There were 152 responses from throughout the 7 Rivers Region. The data from the responses was then compiled into a report that was shared with our regional partners. This information will be used to plan future programs and initiatives to support business growth. Special thanks to regional economic development directors who distributed the survey to businesses in their communities.

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE



BUSINESS SATISFACTION



2016 REGIONAL EVENTS

In 2016, we partnered with communities to offer eight regional events and served over 800 business and community leaders. The topics were selected from requests we received from our investors and members. We appreciate the opportunity to partner with local chambers of commerce and economic development professionals to bring programs to rural areas and increase access to vital information that can help advance our communities.

**CREATING COMMUNITY SOLAR GARDENS
AND FARMS
MARCH 1ST
LA CROSSE, WI**



**HUMAN CAPITAL: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES
FOR RECRUITING AND RETAINING A RURAL
WORKFORCE**

**APRIL 28TH
RUSHFORD, MN**



**IN THE BAG: STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINING
COMMUNITY GROCERY STORES
MAY 11TH
CAMP DOUGLAS, WI**



**RURAL WORKFORCE HOUSING SUMMIT
JUNE 1ST
SPARTA, WI**



**2016 BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY
WELLNESS SUMMIT
JUNE 9TH
DECORAH, IA**



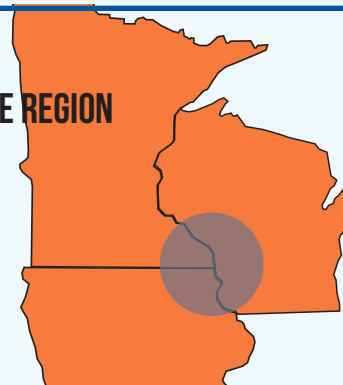
**SET CIVIC FORUM
SEPTEMBER 27TH & NOVEMBER 30TH
TOMAH, WI**



**2016 RISING STARS UNDER 40
OCTOBER 26TH
LA CROSSE, WI**



**2016 STATE OF THE REGION
NOVEMBER 16TH
LA CROSSE, WI**



See page 11 for information about upcoming 2017 that you won't want to miss.

2016 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

5TH ACE EXCHANGE - APRIL 2016

Alliance CEO, Lisa Herr, was one of 51 participants from 24 countries who toured 30+ innovation and technology hubs in 10 cities of the U.S. States of Arizona and California.

The Americas Competitiveness Exchanges (ACE) on Innovation and Entrepreneurship are design to build networks around the hemisphere, and the world to create better innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems. The ACE event created unique opportunities among high-level officials from the public, private and academic sector to advance commerce, accelerate business opportunities, and promote collaboration for all stake holders.



SISTER CITY - EPINAL, FRANCE - JULY 2016

During the month of July 2016, Lisa Herr, Alliance CEO, had the privilege of travelling with the La Crosse's Sister City/Trade delegation to Epinal, France and Friedberg, Germany. It was beneficial to learn how La Crosse is known to our foreign neighbors. Lisa and Vicki Markussen, Executive Director of the La Crosse Chamber of Commerce, prepared presentations to showcase all the new developments in La Crosse and the surrounding areas. These presentations were shared with business executives as well as, chamber and economic development professionals.



From September 28 - October 1, 2016, members of a delegation from La Crosse's sister city of Epinal, France, spent some time in the area. This trip allowed them to see some of the city's successes including a trip to Gundersen Health System and La Crosse's TRANE plant. These visits allowed for the leaders of both the La Crosse area and our sister city Epinal, France to see firsthand some of the similar problems they face, such as urban sprawl and retail vacancies from the downtown core. Working together city leaders strategized ways to help revitalize their downtown areas.

SISTER CITY - FRIEDBERG, GERMANY - JULY 2016

Inbound exchanges have contributed about \$190 million to the US economy. There is a multiplier effect when considering travel related contributions and spending. The economic impact is about \$430 million. Communities are setting up business exchanges that are built on the sister city relationships. The economic impact varies by the level of engagement of the participating cities. We presented to the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI). Meeting with Friedberg and Augsburg Economic Development Professionals allowed us to see some of the common challenges such as workforce, training, and supporting business growth, that we share.



Unternehmensfrühstück
Contractor Breakfast

2016 - 2017 WISE PLAN

WORKFORCE INNOVATION FOR A STRONG ECONOMY

In September 2016, The 7 Rivers Alliance successfully secured \$200,000 in funding to launch a major workforce planning project called the WISE Plan. This project will produce a blueprint for developing and strengthening internal and external employee pipelines. The creation and implementation of a regional talent plan will help employers to fill jobs over the next 10 years.

In January 2017, the Council for Regional Economic Competitiveness (CREC) was selected to work with a regional steering committee of 50+ business and community leaders to develop a 10 year plan for workforce preparation, recruitment and retention. The CREC will also work with three workgroups comprised of 60 leaders to study and make recommendations on the major barriers to sustained employment:

Affordable family housing



Connected regional transportation systems



Access to childcare



The CREC will be working with the Alliance from February through September 2017 to develop a detailed plan. The full plan will be presented at the 2017 State of the Region event on November 15th in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Special thanks to our project partners who helped to make this project a reality: The United States Economic Development Administration, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, La Crosse County, Organic Valley/ CROPP, Mayo Clinic Health System, Gundersen Health System, I+S Group, Dairyland Power Cooperative, Western Technical College and Minnesota State College SE.

2016 - 2017 SET PROGRAM



Stronger Economies Together

The 7 Rivers Alliance was one of seven economic development groups chosen from across the United States for the USDA's Stronger Economies Together program to promote regional rural development by giving local leaders access to resources through the USDA Rural Development and University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension offices.

The 7 Rivers Alliance has teamed up with UW, USDA for an economic development project that will serve Juneau, Monroe, and Jackson counties in Wisconsin.

The purpose of SET is to help rural counties work together as a regional team in developing and implementing a high quality regional economic development plan that builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region.



THANK YOU 2016 INVESTORS & MEMBERS

INVESTORS

Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation
CROPP/Organic Valley
Gundersen Health System
Kwik Trip, Inc.
Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare
Western Technical College
Xcel Energy
Alliant Energy

CenturyLink
Dairyland Power Cooperative
First Supply LLC
La Crosse County Economic Development
Logistics Health
Minnesota State College Southeast
State Bank Financial
Vernon Memorial Healthcare

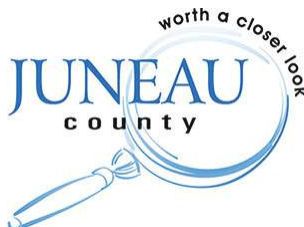
MEMBERS

7 Rivers Recycling, LLC
ABR Employment Services
Allamakee County Econ. Dev.
Alliant Energy
Audrey Kader
Bonnie Peterson
Brenengen Chevrolet, Inc.
Brent Smith
Brickl Brothers
Cecil Wright
CenturyLink
City of Goodview
Dick Ledebuhr (Council Member)-City of Goodview
Charlie Andring (Council Member)-City of Goodview
City of La Crescent
City of La Crosse
Redev. Authority
Coldwell Banker
Coulee Bank
Coulee Cap, Inc.
Crawford County EDC
CROPP/Organic Valley
Dairyland Power Cooperative
DBS Group
Edward Jones Investments
Fayette County
First Supply LLC
Gundersen Lutheran
Health System
Hammes Tool & Die Co.
Health Tradition Health Plan
Highlight, Inc.
Houston County EDA

HSR Associates, Inc.
I&S Group
Jan Gallagher
Joseph Heim
JRM & Associates
Juneau County Economic Development
Kwik Trip, Inc.
La Crescent Chamber of Commerce
La Crosse Area Development Corp
La Crosse Downtown Mainstreet Association
La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce
La Crosse County Economic Development Fund
La Crosse Insurance Agency
La Crosse Medical HSC
La Crosse Regional Airport
Lindon Saline
Logistics Health
Brian Rotty -
Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research
Magnum Broadcasting
MarketSharp Software
Mayo Clinic Health System - Franciscan Healthcare
MCG BioComposites LLC
Mikrut Properties
Minnesota State College Southeast
Mississippi Welders Supply Co
Monroe County
New Albin Savings Bank
Northeast Iowa Community College

PlastiCert
Port Authority of Winona
River Valley Newspaper Group
Ruth Rupp
Rushford Institute for Nanotechnology
Tomah Chamber & Visitor's Center
Torrance Casting
TRANE
Trempealeau County
UW-La Crosse
V.A. Realty
Vernon County
Vernon Economic Dev. Assoc. (VEDA)
Vernon Memorial Healthcare
Village of Ontario
Western Dairyland - Business Centers
Western Technical College
Wieser Brothers General Contractor
Winona Health
Winona National Bank
WHEDA
WXOW 19
Xcel Energy

THANK YOU 2016 EVENT SPONSORS



WELCOME NEW INVESTORS AND MEMBERS IN 2016

ABR Employment Services

Brickl Brothers

Bonnie Peterson

DBS Group

Fayette County

F&M Bank

Houston County

Torrance Casting

TRANE/Ingersoll Rand

Trempealeau County

V.A. Realty

Village of Ontario

CONGRATULATIONS 2016 RISING STAR WINNERS



We were pleased to partner with The River Valley Newspaper Group to offer the 2016 Rising Stars Under 40 program. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Rising Stars Under 40 campaign! We had over 70 nominations representing all three states. These winners display excellence in their everyday lives.

ERIC BASHAW La Crosse, WI
Director of Environmental Compliance, Gundersen Health System

CHUCK BERENDES La Crosse, WI
General Manager, Gerrard-Hoeschler Realtors

BETHANY BRENT La Crosse, WI
Senior Multicultural Education Advisor, School of Education, UW - La Crosse

KEVIN CRONINGER Sparta, WI
Monroe County District Attorney

KEVIN FINKE Winona, MN
AVP Commercial Banker, Merchants Bank

NATHAN FRANKLIN La Crosse, WI
Government Relations Representative, Dairyland Power Cooperative

JOSH GAMER La Crosse, WI
Dean-Integrated Technology Division, Western Technical College

NICK HELSTAD Hixton, WI
Nick's Welding and Fabricating, Inc.

TINA KABUS Onalaska, WI
Regional Staffing Manager, ABR Employment Services

AUSTIN KAISER La Crosse, WI
Product Support Engineer, TRANE

WILL KRATT La Crosse, WI
Associate Principal, ISG Design Firm

ANGELA LALLEMONT Winona, MN
Attorney/Partner, Price, McCluer, Plachecki & Lallemond Law Office

OLE MATHISON La Crosse, WI
Sales Account Manager, Mississippi Welders Supply Co.

JASON MUNZ La Crosse, WI
Assistant Vice President Regional Account Executive, Trust Point Inc.

LAURA PARRISH Decorah, IA
Attorney, Miller Law Firm

COLLIN PRICE Black River Falls, WI
Public Relations Office, Ho-Chunk Nation

JENNIFER ROMBALSKI La Crosse, WI
Director, La Crosse County Health Department

EMILY STANTON La Crosse, WI
Patient Care Supervisor, Mayo Clinic Health System Franciscan Healthcare

LUKE ZAHM Viroqua, WI
Owner, Driftless Cafe

Special thanks to our partner:

River Valley
media group
PRINT DIGITAL SOCIAL MOBILE

2017 UPCOMING EVENTS



2017 WORKFORCE SUMMIT

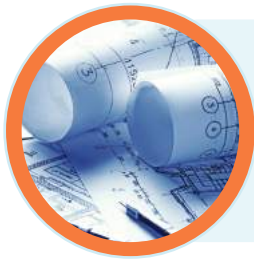
MAY 10, 2017

Best practices for recruiting and retaining a diverse and skilled workforce will be presented at this forum. Hiring employers and HR consultants from throughout the region will share their strategies.

WALKABLE COMMUNITIES

JUNE 8, 2017

The 7 Rivers Alliance will partner with La Crosse Downtown Mainstreet to host a forum on strategies for increasing the walkability of their business corridors and downtown districts.



BEST PRACTICES IN PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

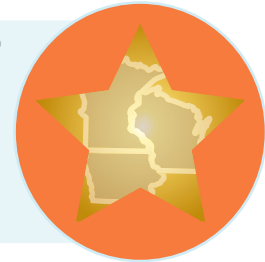
SEPTEMBER 2017

This forum will highlight best practices in planning and development. Highly efficient communities and dynamic public-private developments will be showcased.

STATE OF THE REGION & RISING STARS UNDER 40

NOVEMBER 15, 2017

Our annual event provides an update on the state of economy and emerging trends. Annual Rising Stars Under 40 and the results of the 2017 Executive Survey will be presented.



ECO-DEVO

QUARTERLY

The 7 Rivers Alliance will gather regional economic professionals to share best practices and plan regional development strategies. Meetings will be held throughout the region.

- March 16, 2017 -- Winona, MN
- May 31, 2017 -- La Crosse, WI
- April 12, 2017 -- West Salem, WI
- July 13, 2017 -- La Crosse, WI

WISE PLAN

2017

From February through September 2017 consultants from the Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness (CREC) will be working with leaders from throughout the region to develop a 10-year workforce preparation, recruitment and retention plan. This project will culminate in a written plan with recommendations for positioning the region with programs and services that ensure we have a steady talent pipeline of workers in the future.



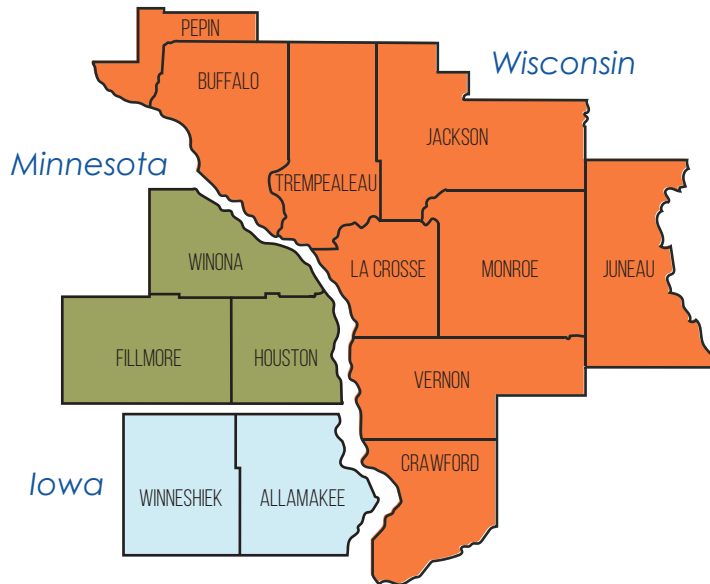
THE 7 RIVERS REGION

Economic Development Agencies

Winneshiek, IA	Juneau, WI
Allamakee, IA	Jackson, WI
Winona, MN	Trempealeau, WI
Houston, MN	S.W. Wisconsin ITBEC
La Crosse, WI	WEDC (WI)
Monroe, WI	MRRPC (WI)
Vernon, WI	SMIF Foundation (MN)
Crawford, WI	DEED (MN)

Chambers of Commerce

Decorah, IA	Galesville, WI
Winona, MN	Sparta, WI
Lanesboro, MN	Tomah, WI
La Crescent, MN	Viroqua, WI
La Crosse, WI	Prairie Du Chien, WI
	Black River Falls, WI



ALLIANCE BY THE NUMBERS

States: 3

Events and Programs: 14

Counties: 14

Number Served: 875

Total Population: 435,000

Average Satisfaction Score: 85%

Responses to Site Selectors: 10

Commercial Properties Promoted: 8

Community Presentations: 40

THE 7 RIVERS ALLIANCE

601 - 7th Street North, Ste 400

La Crosse, WI 54601

608.787.8777

7riversalliance.org

