

2024 Annual Report



GREATER GRAND FORKS
**Young
Professionals**



2024 Board of Directors



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Ternus**



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**Executive
Director**

**Gon
Carlson**

A Letter From the President

At the Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals' Annual Launch in April of 2024, to a packed house at the Ralph Engelstad Arena, we proudly declared one thing to be true: There has never been a better time to be a young professional in the Greater Grand Forks area.

Thanks to the hard work of our Board of Directors, current Executive Director Gon Carlson, former Executive Director Sam Jenson, and our Marketing & Events Coordinator Madilyn Lee, GGFYP has ushered in a new era of involvement and programming opportunities. With over 400 registered GGFYP members, we have doubled our membership in a year's time. The increase in membership has allowed for an increase in engagement opportunities, as GGFYP now hosts nearly 40 events and programs per year. From passive programming such as book clubs and video gaming to recreational sports leagues, industry tours and more, our organization has worked tirelessly to find new ways to engage our membership with one another and the community.

One of our flagship initiatives, the Community Mentorship Program, is a shining example of what happens when collaboration meets purpose. Thanks to a strategic partnership with the Grand Forks EDC, they received funds from the North Dakota Regional Workforce Impact Program (RWIP) Grant to dedicate funding for this program. We've seen countless mentees secure new internships, land career-defining jobs, and make the decision to build their futures here in Grand Forks.

The 2022 census revealed a 24% increase in individuals aged 25-39 in our county. This surge is no coincidence—it's a testament to what happens when a community invests in its future by creating spaces and opportunities for young professionals to thrive. GGFYP is proud to be at the forefront of this movement, driving the momentum that keeps our region vibrant and growing.

What began as a simple vision of creating connections and enhancing our communities has blossomed into something far more impactful. Today, GGFYP is about creating lifelong relationships, cultivating volunteerism, and supporting continuous personal and professional growth. Together, we are shaping the future of Greater Grand Forks, one young professional at a time.



Matthew Ternus
GGFYP President

A Letter From the Director

As I step into the role of Executive Director, I want to express my excitement for the journey ahead at the Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals (GGFYP). Since starting in October, I have connected with so many people within the Greater Grand Forks Community. It has been reiterated how much of an impact our organization has on the region and the community it builds between professionals. I am grateful for all the advice and guidance I am receiving from my Board of Directors, our Advisory Board, and members of GGFYP. Our value to the region is important and impactful, and as we step into the new year GGFYP will continue creating excellent events and greater connections.

Before stepping into my role, I was an active member of GGFYP and experienced firsthand the welcoming atmosphere and the benefits of being a part of and attending the GGFYP events. With the opportunity that GGFYP has given to me, I am excited to continue offering the best of what the region and GGFYP have to offer. As was done to me when I started participating in this amazing organization. Without the connections and opportunities that GGFYP has to offer, I would not be where I am now.

Our value to the region is important and impactful, and as we step into the new year GGFYP will continue creating excellent events and greater connections. None of this could be possible without the continued support of our sponsors and our members. To them, we are always grateful.

Together, we grow the Greater Grand Forks community. Together, we are Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals.



Gon Carlson
GGFYP Executive Director

Committee Report

Social Events



The Social Events Committee hosts monthly social events to help young professionals make meaningful connections through new experiences in the Grand Forks region. I like to say that Social Events is the ‘fun committee!’

At the beginning of 2024, I charged the committee with planning events at least three to four months in advance. I am proud to report that we’ve been able to keep consistent with this initiative! Advance planning has proved very helpful and allowed us more time to brainstorm ideas, firm up details, and solidify a timeline. This has led to a larger lead time in advertising and an increase in event attendance.

Event highlights from 2024 include a tour of the Ralph Engelstad Arena and UND Hockey Game, GGFYP Night at Northern Air Indoor Action Park, Young Hearts, Global Starts 5K & Annual Picnic, and a tour of the Grape Mill Vineyard & Winery. The committee’s signature events, Learn to Curl & Chili Cook Off and ArtSee saw great attendance and engagement. Curling had the largest attendance recorded with more than 50 members participating.

The event that I am most proud of from 2024 is the Young Hearts, Global Starts 5K & Annual Picnic! Committee members had been suggesting a 5K for a couple of years, and since the committee was planning events four months out, it was a perfect opportunity to take on a larger scale event. The event was a big lift, so several people came together outside regular social events committee meetings to help plan and execute. With 25 people participating in the 5K and GGFYP covering the cost of the t-shirts, we raised \$700 to donate to Global Friends Coalition. With this, they could buy beds for a family seeking refuge who arrived in Grand Forks with very little.

Social events saw an average of 39 people attend from January to August. That does not include ArtSee which saw 175 people and draws a large crowd from outside of GGFYP members.



Mark Maliskey
GGFYP Social Events Chair

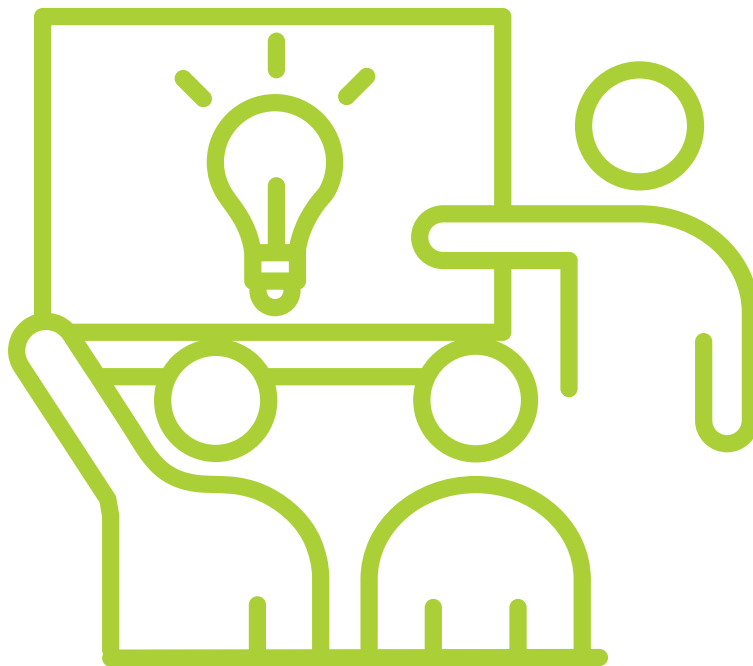


Committee Report

Professional Development

The Professional Development Committee works hard to provide the organization's members with unique professional and personal growth opportunities. The Committee meets monthly to plan Lunch & Learns and Dinner & Learns based on the topics developed by the Committee and other YP members. The topics have included interview skills for new jobs and promotions, tours of Retrax and the Rydell Toy Shop, Lessons in Early Management from Leon Thomas, and green dot bystander training.

Additionally, the Committee has worked to expand the organization's professional development opportunities. The Committee will continue the Community Mentorship Program in the Fall and Winter of 2024. Through the Mentorship Program, GGFYP members will be paired with mentors from around Greater Grand Forks. The mentorship program had a huge impact in 2022 and 2023 thanks to the willingness of the mentors and mentees. This program will be a staple of the Professional Development Committee moving forward



Gannon Karsky
GGFYP Professional Development Chair

Committee Report

Community Involvement



The Community Involvement Committee is dedicated to connecting Young Professionals with opportunities to engage in the community. Whether it's volunteering at local events, assisting the efforts of organizations in the area, or hosting its own activities, the committee plays an active role in making meaningful connections and fostering involvement.

The year kicked off with the Pork & Brew volunteer event at the Alerus Center, where 19 volunteers participated, exceeding initial expectations. This event received positive feedback from both volunteers and attendees alike, setting the stage for a strong start to the year. In February, the committee organized a Valentine's Day Card Writing event at Up North Pizza Pub, which saw an impressive turnout of 27 members. Together, we created 84 handmade cards for residents at Edgewood Living. In addition, the committee launched the "Food Bank February" initiative, where members donated nonperishable food items throughout the month, benefiting the North Country Food Bank.

March featured another standout event, a collaborative bowling night with Development Homes, Inc. (DHI) to celebrate National Developmental Disabilities Month. Over 60 clients from DHI attended, alongside six GGFYP volunteers, making it one of the highest-attended events of the year. Feedback from DHI staff was overwhelmingly positive, noting the meaningful impact of social engagement for their clients. Following this, the committee organized the Speed Volunteering Bag Stapling event in late March, where 20 members came together to prepare 1,000 bags for the upcoming Orange Bag Event in April. Following the Orange Bag preparation, the actual event saw more than 20 volunteers throughout the day and produced sizable donations for each organization.

Looking ahead, the committee intends to finish the year strong with two YP member favorites: Oktoberfest volunteering and HollyDazzle's S'more kit assemble. We look forward to participating in these events and continuing to connect YP's with the Greater Grand Forks community through our events. Thank you to all those who have attended committee meetings and events! Your dedication and consistent turnout for these events reflect the committee's growing influence in making meaningful contributions and engagements in the community.



Danielle Piekarski
GGFY Community Involvement Chair

"Learn to Play Pickleball" - Social Events



"Reverse Workforce Panel" - Professional Development



"S'more Kit Packing for HollyDazzle" - Community Involvement



Board Initiatives



Kaelan Reedy



Member-at-Large

The Members at Large have the opportunity to create additional initiatives outside of the committee events and these traditionally provide social or educational benefits for different interests young professionals may have. In the past, these initiatives have included book clubs, volleyball teams, and sports brackets.

Caleb Eilts



Member-at-Large

Walking Club



The walking club was created as part of the GGFYP's mission to promote physical wellness and social engagement among young professionals. Providing a casual, enjoyable way for members to connect, network, & explore local parks, the club provided a welcoming space for regulars, newcomers to the area, & even a few dogs to join in. Each walk was a 1-2 mile route through different parks, providing an easy 30-45 minute commitment for participants. With one weather-related cancellation, the walks were executed weekly, fostering connections and offering a refreshing way to experience the city's green spaces. To celebrate the final walk at Lincoln Park, a group of five gathered for ice cream, wrapping up the summer initiative with a fun & memorable moment.

Volleyball League

Continuing from 2023, GGFYP sponsored three volleyball teams this year. We had one team of six players for the winter/spring indoor season and two teams/19 participants for the summer sand season. This has been one of the best activities we have been able to sponsor. We had one of our sand teams get 5th place and another team played their hardest in the summer rain.





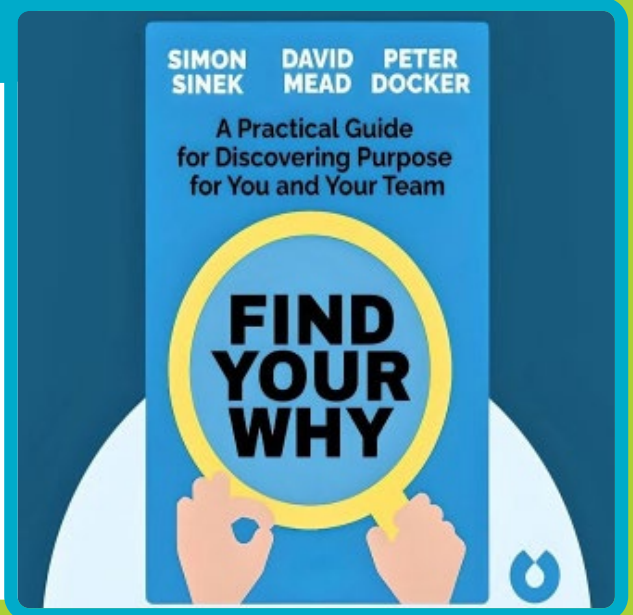
Discord

The GGFYP Discord server was created as a digital initiative to provide members with a space to interact and connect outside of official events or meetings. The goal of the server is to foster networking, share ideas, and build a stronger sense of community among our members that enjoy playing video games. By offering a casual, online platform, members can engage with each other more frequently, exchange resources, and collaborate on projects, helping to strengthen relationships and encourage professional growth in an informal setting.

Book Club

In spring of 2024, we hosted our second book club where we read, *Find your Why: A Practical Guide for Discovering Purpose for You and Your Team* by Simon Sinek. We had 11 participants and spent two months meeting and discussing the book.

Participating members received a free copy of the book in their preferred format (Audiobook, physical, digital, ect.) paid for by GGFYP.



Marketing Committee

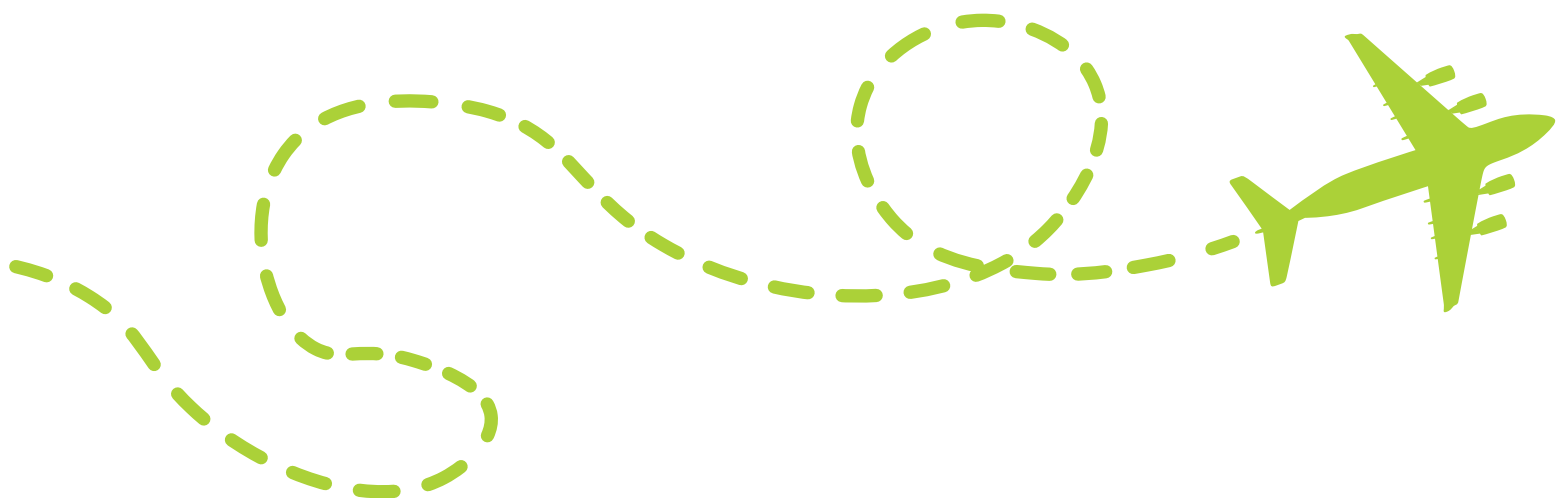
In 2023, GGFYP hired a Marketing Intern and Contractor to provide support in social media and other advertising efforts. To support the role, the Marketing Committee was formed by asking specific marketing professionals in GGFYP to attend. The committee meets every month and brainstorms new ways to communicate initiatives and evaluates social media. Some highlights from the committee include a video highlighting the organization and the benefits a member receives, increased social media engagement, and an updated Corporate Sponsor Packet.



Grand Forks AFB Development

Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota is the home of the 319th Reconnaissance Wing. The air force base is swiftly growing with newcomers and a large source of new professionals being introduced to the greater Grand Forks area.

The connection with GFAFB and GGFYP has been growing. This summer, in an effort to connect GGFYP out at the base, we were able to bring 30 GGFYP members out to the Air Force Base for their Summer Fest Concert. Our outreach Coordinator, Lilly Stindham, introduced the civilians and Airmen to each other to form connections in hopes that more Airmen attend GGFYP events.





Student Group Development

The UND Young Professionals student organization has made significant strides in fostering a supportive and engaging environment for UND's students. We have emphasized our core pillars of professional development, community involvement, and social engagement. Through volunteering events at Journey Home Animal Rescue and a pet supplies drive benefiting Circle of Friends Animal Shelter, our members have had opportunities to give back to their community.

Professional development has been further enriched through events such as Career Jeopardy and our annual Leadership Seminar, equipping students with practical knowledge to advance their career paths. Social engagement remains a cornerstone of our organization, with events such as the Yard Games Night and a successful General Interest Meeting creating connections and shared purpose among members. These initiatives highlight UNDYP's dedication to cultivating a well-rounded, community-oriented network for growth and connection for students at UND.

GGFYP Board members continue to meet with Northland and University of Minnesota Crookston faculty, staff and students to re-engage their respective campuses. GGFYP continues to try to implement its program offerings via faculty, staff, and student orientations, community expos, and individual meetings with campus leadership.

Member Demographics

The GGFYP Fall 2024 survey collected responses from a diverse age group, mainly between 21-35, with a few respondents over 36. Members provided feedback on their engagement with the organization, the value they derive, barriers to attendance, and suggestions for improvement. Below is a summary and analysis of key findings.

Key Findings

Value & Satisfaction

Networking and Community Building: Most members find significant value in GGFYP, specifically through networking and community involvement. Many respondents highlighted meaningful connections they have developed, which include both social and professional relationships.

Professional Development: Members appreciate events like lunch-and-learns, workshops, and business tours, which they find beneficial for professional growth.

Challenges & Barriers

Time Constraints: A recurring theme was difficulty attending events due to personal schedules, often cited as work commitments, family obligations, or overlapping events. Some respondents suggested that events scheduled during traditional work hours, such as lunch-and-learns, can be challenging for those with rigid schedules.

Demographic Gap: There is a perceived gap in age demographics, with some members over 30 feeling that events cater more to younger members, creating a sense of disconnect.

Event Diversity & Frequency

Event Variety: While most members feel that the variety of events is adequate, some suggested more inclusive and diverse event types, particularly those geared toward cultural engagement, family-friendly activities, and targeted professional development (e.g., industry-specific workshops).

Event Frequency: A few respondents expressed a desire for more frequent engagements, suggesting that once-a-month events may not suffice for building strong connections within the community.



Suggestions for Improvement

Enhanced Communication & Onboarding

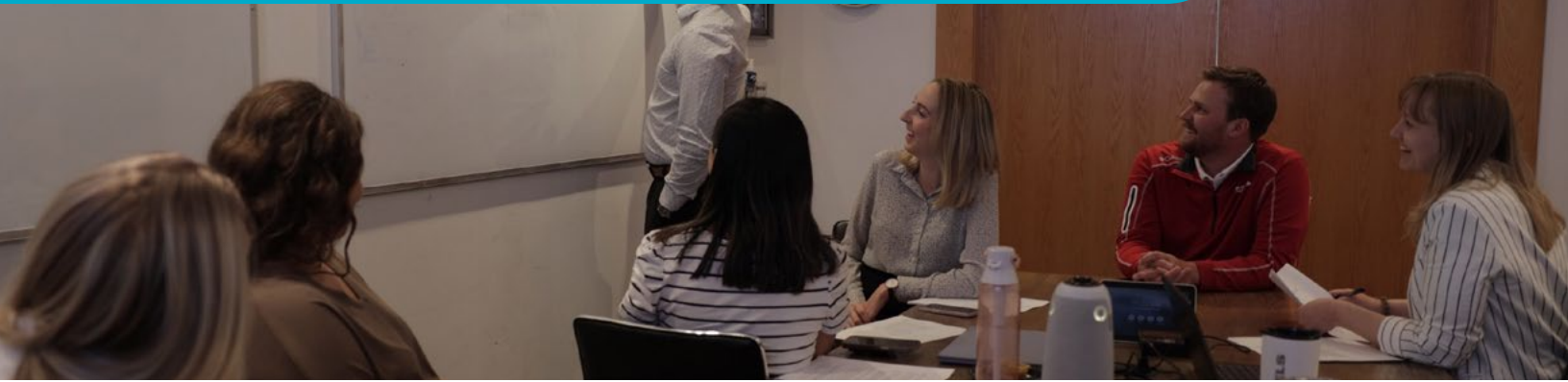
Respondents highlighted the need for better communication around committee meetings and member onboarding. Suggestions include more welcome sessions for new members, improved meeting visibility, and clearer instructions on how to participate actively.

Targeted Events

There is interest in more family-inclusive events, industry-focused networking, and interactive professional development sessions like LinkedIn workshops and career etiquette dinners. Additionally, members over 30 requested events that resonate with their demographic to foster inclusivity.

GGFYP members generally find value in the organization, particularly for networking and community involvement. To enhance member satisfaction, GGFYP could consider more flexible event scheduling, diversified event offerings, improved onboarding for new members, and targeted communication. Addressing these areas may help increase engagement and make GGFYP a more inclusive space for professionals across all age groups.

Financial Report



The Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals has and continues to hold a secure financial position, even amid a transition in Executive Director mid-Q3 of 2024. Thanks to the stability provided by the tremendous support from our corporate sponsors over the last several years, our leadership was given the ability to invest the time needed to recruit the ideal candidate for our full-time role. Most importantly, our community's Young Professionals suffered no interruption in the programs they have come to know and love. That's important, because in the past year alone, we have welcomed 142 brand-new members—and there are no indication of our momentum stopping.

Change can be disruptive, but as Young Professionals know, disruption can bring innovation. With a fresh Executive Director at the helm, we are eager both to re-engage our long-standing relationships and to introduce ourselves to new local organizations. Our momentum so far has led us to a deeper sense of collaboration with our community partners, and better aligned us with the evolving needs of our region's young workforce.

On the inside, Our Board will be reviewing the previous Strategic Plan organized in 2022, and constructing a new strategy tailored to address the needs of Young Professionals in our region. Internal initiatives tackled over the last three years have enabled us to organize our administrative workflows and better leverage financial data to strengthen our decision-making processes.



With these improvements in place, we are very well-positioned to invest in new activities and programs, enhance our community partnerships, and continue elevating the quality of life for Young Professionals throughout the region.

Kaelan Reedy
2025-26 GGFYP Treasurer



Financial Report

2025 Budget



As we step into 2025, our Board intends to organize our annual budget in the following way:

General Operating – 75.86%

Day-to-day operational expenses to run the organization, including things such as office rent, supplies, insurance, and salaries.

Marketing & Keynote Events – 11.61%

Marketing expenses related to GGFYP's social media management and other advertising expenditures.

Costs related to keynote events, including Annual Launch & ArtSee.

Committee Events & Involvement – 6.72%

Events and activities planned by the GGFYP committees (community involvement, professional development, and social events).

Activities and Ideas generated by member-led initiatives (UNDYP, Book Clubs)

Miscellaneous – 4.56%

Mainly allocation for charitable contributions & and in-kind expenditures.

Staff Professional Development – 1.24%

Allocated funds for staff professional development and networking.

Strategic Plan Updates

Each year, the Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals (GGFYP) Board of Directors conducts a thorough analysis of our strategic plan to address two key objectives: first, to evaluate our progress toward established goals, and second, to identify any additional objectives that could further advance our mission. Through this review process, the Board reaffirms that GGFYP's mission continues to align with and drive the collective efforts of our staff, Board, and membership base.

We are pleased to note that GGFYP membership has reached an all-time high. However, we recognize the need to sustain and deepen engagement with our targeted groups, including college students, Air Force personnel, and other key community demographics. Additionally, we aim to expand our outreach to employees of our corporate sponsors, as they are integral to our organization's ecosystem. To this end, we are exploring new software solutions to enhance our ability to track event attendance and participation. This improved tracking will allow us to highlight and celebrate the contributions and involvement of our corporate sponsors more effectively.

Maintaining comprehensive historical records and refining our internal organizational processes remains a top priority for GGFYP. Such documentation is essential for ensuring continuity and facilitating onboarding for new Board members and staff, particularly during times of transition, such as the recent change in the Executive Director position. By prioritizing these records, we can continue to support a smooth and effective handover of knowledge and responsibilities, thereby reinforcing the foundation of our organization for years to come.

VISIONARY

\$10,000+



GOLD

\$5,000+



SILVER

\$2,500+

Alerus Financial
AE2S
Choice Bank

Grand Forks Air Force Base
Grand Forks Public Schools
Happy Harry's

UND Alumni Association & Foundation
University of Minnesota Crookston

BRONZE

\$1,000+

322 Hospitality Group
Alerus Center
American Crystal Sugar
Bluepeak
Bremer Bank
City of East Grand Forks
Cirrus Aircraft
Downtown Development Association

Empire Arts Center
Express Employment Professionals
First Community Credit Union
Gate City Bank
Grand Forks County
Grand Forks Region EDC
Houston Engineering
Koda Bank

Leighton Broadcasting
Northland Community & Technical College
Ralph Engelstad Arena
Retrax
US Bank
Valley Senior Living

SMALL BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP

\$500+ OR IN-KIND

AgCounty Farm Credit Services
American Federal
Anchor Marketing
Bully Brew
Community Contractors | PCL Construction
Crary Real Estate
CVIC
Dakota Commercial
Deeks Pizza

Development Homes Inc
Fenworks
Frandsen Bank & Trust
GF Park District
Grand Forks Herald
Grand Forks Subaru
iHeart Media
Jersey Mikes
Lunseth Trucking Company

Northern Plains Rail Services
River Cinema
TruHome Property Solutions
Zimney Foster PC

Updated December 2024

INVEST & POSITIVELY IMPACT GREATER GRAND FORKS

Greater Grand Forks Young Professionals is a 501(C)6, member-based organization. It is completely funded by community organizations that believe in making a positive impact in the region. The consistent sponsorship of the organizations above

has directly contributed to the 24% increase in the number of people ages 25-39 from 2012-2022 in Grand Forks County. If you want to continue to attract and retain young professionals, contact GGFYP Executive Director Gon Carlson to invest.



Gon Carlson
Executive Director
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