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Williston Economic Development, Small Business Development Center celebrate 6-Year Partnership

On September 8, the Williston City Commission approved up to \$45,000 in a Williston STAR Fund Community Growth/Build grant for the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), a component of Williston State College. This grant marks the sixth anniversary of the City of Williston's partnership with the SBDC.

In 2015, Williston Economic Development (WED), the SBDC and the Tri-County Regional Development Council (TCRDC) launched a unique plan to be housed under one roof at the City of Williston Center for Development. In addition, the Center for Development houses the Williston Convention and Visitor Bureau, Williston Development Services, Williston Building Safety and Williston Planning and Zoning.

The one-stop shop for community development services has served the community well. The WED, SBDC and TCRDC have helped hundreds of local entrepreneurs start, manage and grow their businesses during the past five years.

"Everyone under one roof is a winning formula," said WED Executive Director, Shawn Wenko. "It allows us the opportunity to interact daily as it relates to economic development. Many of our funded business startups have happened solely because we could mix and match our services. Without the help of SBDC and Tri-County, we wouldn't be doing the volume of development we are doing today."

"The advantage of being under one roof is we can bounce ideas off each other daily and can be more efficient for clients when they have ideas or need financing," added Williston SBDC Director, Keith Olson. "We have a very entrepreneurial driven customer base which keeps us busy and when we have great projects, we have had the resources to help the client be successful."

Inside the Center for Development, WED and SBDC share office space on street level of the east wing while TCRDC is located in the west wing. The office sharing program has also helped lead the state in projects and funding.

The Williston SBDC and TCRDC cover northwest North Dakota which includes Divide, Burke, Williams, Mountrail, and McKenzie counties. The SBDC office helps new and existing business owners with all facets of owning and operating businesses including business plans, cash flows, loan preparations, research and many other small business items while TCRDC specializes in providing community/economic development planning, implementation assistance and business development assistance that leads to sustainable regional growth and development.

"Thanks to the City of Williston's continued support and investment in small business our activity is strong, and we continue to see many clients. It is a great entrepreneur ecosystem," said Olson.

All services offered by WED, SBDC and TCRDC are free. WED is funded by the Williston one cent city sales tax while SBDC is funded by the Small Business Association, the State of North Dakota, and many local banks and agencies. TCRDC is funded through federal, state and county dollars.

"Our services are here for the entrepreneur," stated Wenko "At the end of the day our goal is to economically grow the region."

For more information contact Shawn Wenko at WED at shawnw@ci.williston.nd.us; Keith Olson at SBDC at keith.r.olson@willistonstate.edu; or Everette Enno at TCRDC at everettee@ci.williston.nd.us.