



North Dakota Small Business Development Centers

North Dakota SBDC State Advisory Board Handbook

University of North Dakota

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Section One: Introduction to the North Dakota Small Business Development Network

Network Overview

The North Dakota Small Business Development Network serves the entrepreneurs and small businesses of North Dakota, empowering them to thrive by providing no-cost training and technical assistance through three different programs:

- North Dakota Small Business Development Centers (ND SBDC)
- North Dakota APEX Accelerator (*formerly ND PTAC*)
- Veterans Business Outreach Center of the Dakotas (VBOC)

Each program operates with its own goals and specialties, which are outlined in this handbook, but all work collaboratively to support small business in North Dakota. As the largest program within the network, the ND SBDC typically operates with eight to ten service centers geographically dispersed throughout the state. All are staffed by certified business advisors. VBOC of the Dakotas operates out of one center and serves clients in both North and South Dakota (currently planning for a second location in South Dakota). ND APEX Accelerator operates out of three service centers that serve the entire state.

The ND Small Business Development Network is a partnership between federal government funders (U.S. Small Business Administration), the State of North Dakota (Commerce Department), and the North Dakota University System (University of North Dakota).

Primary Network Goals

- Provide quality business advising and training assistance to small businesses in all areas that promote innovation, expansion, increased productivity, and improved management.
- Serve as a focal point for linking, developing, and expanding the resources of federal, state, and local government with colleges, universities, and the private sector to meet the specialized complex needs of the small business community.
- Upgrade and modify services as needed to meet the changing and evolving needs of the small business community.
- Increase non-federal financial support to enhance and expand program activities.
- Contribute to state and local economic growth and create a broad-based system.

Section Two: Bylaws

Name

North Dakota Small Business Development Centers State Advisory Board

Authority & Purpose

13 CFR 130.360 authorizes and requires that federal Small Business Development Centers establish an advisory board to advise, counsel and confer with that network's State/Regional Director.

The purpose of the Advisory Board is to advise, support, and advocate for the ND SBDC Network. Board members provide the State Director with insight into the world of small business and ensure that the interests of small business owners and entrepreneurs are represented in the network's efforts to anticipate and meet current and future business needs.

Membership

In accordance with 15 USC § 648(j), state advisory boards should be comprised of representatives from small businesses or associations representing small businesses located throughout the entire area of service. Additionally, veterans, women, minorities, and Native Americans should be represented as appropriate. Members of the board are appointed by the State Director. The membership of the board shall always include at least two small business owners, two economic developers, two lenders, the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND) Board President, and the SBA District Director (ex-officio). Membership is not limited to these individuals and SBDC leadership should seek to engage other individuals when it is determined they will bring a desired skillset, knowledge area, and passion to the board that will benefit small business in North Dakota. Special consideration should be given to the following individuals and organizations:

- Greater North Dakota Chamber (GNDC), President & CEO
- Bank of North Dakota (BND), President & CEO
- University of North Dakota (UND) Nistler College of Business and Public Administration, Dean
- North Dakota Department of Commerce, Commissioner
- North Dakota Bankers Association, Independent Community Bankers Association
- Former state and local leaders

There shall never be fewer than eight or more than thirteen members on the board. Board composition, both size and representation, is at the discretion of the State Director.

Identifying New Board Members

Current and previous board members, SBDC service center staff, Lead Center staff, and all network stakeholders are encouraged to identify and refer potential State Advisory Board members. Potential members will complete an application which will help to identify their strengths and the benefit to their service on the board. The potential new board member will also have a meeting with the State Director, Associate State Director, and a Center Director to discuss the role and responsibilities of board members. The State Director has full discretion in determining who sits on the board.

Terms

Members shall serve four-year terms, staggered so that no more than half of the members are new. Members may be asked to serve additional terms at the discretion of the State Director. Any Advisory Board member may end their service on the board by providing a 30-day notice. Members may serve multiple terms. Terms run concurrent with the award year, January 1st – December 31st.

Board Roles and Responsibilities

Board members will:

- Participate in the network's strategic and annual planning processes
- Provide information and perspective on the network's services, structure, and financial position, specifically regarding local financial support
- Assist with promotion of network activities and accomplishments
- Advocate for appropriate federal, state, and local funding for the program and network
 - This includes submitting testimony to the North Dakota legislature on the behalf of the SBDC during legislative session
- Identify and encourage and/or secure local/regional support, financial and otherwise, for the program
- Provide counsel in building collaborative relationships and partnerships
- Act as a link between the ND SBDC service centers and the business community
- Represent and advance the network in good faith
- Board members are expected to attend all meetings, but at *minimum* must attend three of the four yearly meetings

Meeting Procedure and Schedule

The State Director serves as meeting convener and the Associate State Director serves as meeting recorder. Meeting invites shall be sent no later than one month in advance. Agendas shall be sent the week prior to the meeting.

Time Commitment

- Two In-Person Meetings (Spring and Fall) (4 hours each)
 - Fall, Joint Advisory Board & Network Staff meeting
 - Spring, ND Network Stakeholders Summit
- Travel Time for meetings (varies)
- 2 Conference Calls (Winter and Summer) (1-1½ hours each)
- Occasional calls with State Director to connect and provide input (1-2 hours)
- Writing and/or presenting legislative testimony biennially (1-2 hours)
- Additional participation (varies)
 - Ex. Attending a SBDC training event or workshop
 - Ex. Connecting with regional SBDC staff member for coffee and conversation

Handbook and Bylaw Review

The Handbook and bylaws will be reviewed at least yearly by the Lead Center. Open conversation and consideration of the documents by board members is always encouraged; time will be set aside during the winter State Advisory Board conference call for formal

discussion of the documents. Final decision on any changes to the documents is up to the State Director.

Note: Travel expenses for ND SBDC purposes are reimbursed

Section Three: Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

To be an effective and engaged board member, remember the two A's: Advise and Advocate

Advise

Provide advice and counsel to the ND SBDC State Director and Associate State Director on matters affecting entrepreneurs and small businesses and their relationship with the ND SBDC:

- Attend semi-annual meetings each year that are in-person joint meetings of the State Advisory Board and network staff, and participate in other meetings as conference calls with the State Director and Associate State Director as needed
- Advise ND SBDC leadership and staff on effective delivery of services in the state
- Provide recommendations for updates to and improvement of advising, training, public relations, and resource programs available through the ND SBDC, or new programs for possible development by the ND SBDC
- Share ideas or examples of programs that provide an increased opportunity for North Dakota's small businesses and entrepreneurs to prosper
- Advise in the development of the ND SBDC's strategic plans and objectives
- Be engaged with your local ND SBDC service center

Advocate

Advocacy is integral to ensuring the ND SBDC can provide services to our state's small businesses. The network receives and operates on federal, state, and local public dollars, and some private funding. Therefore, network staff are restricted from lobbying and advocating for ND SBDC programs and program funds. Network staff can educate local officials, leaders, and others by sharing information on the program's services, economic impacts, budgets, etc., but cannot encourage or advocate for any specific program, policy, or funding. As volunteers, Advisory Board members *can* advocate and lobby by sharing the needs of the ND SBDC and North Dakota's small businesses with policymakers, local leaders, and other stakeholders.

Ways to Advocate:

- Engage federal, state, and local officials and share the purpose and value of the ND SBDC along with any direct benefits of the program you see. Easy ways to do this:
 - Call or write letters to North Dakota's State Legislators and North Dakota's Congressional Senators or Representative
 - Meet with your city council representative or county commissioner
 - Have lunch with a local legislator
- Develop relationships with decision makers, as an ND SBDC Advisory Board member you *are* a trusted voice on small business policy issues, and a *resource* to legislators
- When able and appropriate, advocate for the program on radio, television, public service programs, at civic/community functions, and to boards/committees
- If involved in or employed by a partner organization or agency, represent and promote the goals and interests of the ND SBDC network when appropriate

**We encourage board members to utilize our branding and positioning statements along with our #DidYouKnow fact sheets when sharing information and advocating for the Network.*

Section Four: Program Overviews

North Dakota Small Business Development Centers (ND SBDC)

North Dakota Small Business Development Centers (ND SBDC) help North Dakotans, businesses to be opened in North Dakota, and businesses working with a North Dakota lender to start, manage, and grow their businesses. *Our credentialed advisors empower North Dakota small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive, thus accelerating business growth in communities and positively impacting our state's economy. When small businesses thrive, communities thrive, North Dakota thrives.*

Individual SBDC Networks are located throughout the nation and separated by state or region. *The national network of SBDCs is our nation's largest and most impactful economic development program.* Each SBDC will tailor their programs and services to focus on individual state, regional, and community needs. SBDCs offer broad and specialized support services to provide solutions for basic and unique small business challenges and projects. SBDCs are committed to assisting the entire small business community regardless of race, sex, or geographic location. Business advising services, sometimes referred to as counseling or consulting, are free of charge by law. Additional training seminars or workshops are offered for free or for a nominal fee to cover event-related costs. Each SBDC advisor is tasked with evaluating business needs, recommending training workshops, and providing guidance to address specific concerns. The SBDC approach is to advise and teach our clients, not to do the work for the clients.

All small business owners or potential owners are eligible to receive SBDC services. The SBA has size standards that define what a 'small business' is to determine whether an entity is eligible to receive SBDC programs and services. Size standards are established by type of economic activity or industry under the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). See size regulations [here](#). Over 98% of businesses in North Dakota are considered a 'small business' by these standards.

Any work with government entities or non-profit organizations normally does not count toward reportable national program milestones for SBDCs and must therefore be limited and pre-approved by SBDC network leadership, typically the state director (the exception is if the non-profit directly assists for-profit small businesses, then the SBDC is indirectly serving the small business).

ND APEX Accelerator (formerly North Dakota Procurement Technical Assistance Center ND PTAC)

The North Dakota APEX Accelerator is the state's main resource for assisting ND businesses in obtaining federal, state, and local government contracts. Our procurement professionals work to help local businesses compete successfully in the government marketplace, serving as the bridge between buyer and supplier. They bring both the knowledge of government contracting and the capabilities of contractors to maximize fast, reliable service to our government with better quality and at lower costs.

The national network consists of ninety-four APEX Accelerators with over 300 local offices. Each individual center reflects the needs, priorities, and resources of the area it serves. Some APEX Accelerators are administered directly by state governments while others partner with

universities, community colleges, local economic development corporations, or other local institutions. Some APEX Accelerators operate within Bureau of Indian Affairs areas exclusively serving Native American owned businesses. Many, like the ND APEX Accelerator, are affiliated with their local Small Business Development Centers or other small business programs. All APEX Accelerators are staffed with advisors experienced in government contracting and provide a wide range of services including classes and seminars, individual advising, easy access to bid opportunities, contract specifications, procurement histories, and other information necessary to successfully compete for government contracts.

Many APEX Accelerator advisors have backgrounds in government acquisitions, and all receive ongoing training to keep pace with constantly evolving acquisitions procedures and policies. The Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (APTAC) provides a network that allows any APEX Accelerator advisor almost instant access to the expertise and experience of over 500 colleagues, as well as real-time information from government agencies regarding new requirements and initiatives.

Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) of the Dakotas

Located nationwide, VBOCs enhance existing “on-installation” transition assistance programs, with the [Boots to Business](#) training curriculum, and also offer “off-installation” Boots to Business Reboot workshops. The program is designed to provide entrepreneurial development services such as one-on-one business advising, business training, mentoring, and resource partner referrals to active and transitioning service members, veterans, National Guard and Reserve members, and military spouses interested in starting or growing a small business. The SBA has 22 organizations participating in this cooperative agreement and serving as Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOC). Our *VBOC of the Dakotas* serves both North Dakota and South Dakota.

VBOCs conduct entrepreneurial development workshops that specifically address the major challenges of self-employment. An important segment of these workshops entails leading participants through the processes used to evaluate business concepts while providing them with the foundational knowledge required to develop a business plan. Additionally, participants are introduced to U.S. Small Business Administration resources that are available to access start-up capital, technical assistance, and contracting opportunities that will assist with their entrepreneurial journey and ensure their success as a business owner.

Section Five: Organizational Structure and Funding

The University of North Dakota (UND) has served as the program host for the North Dakota Small Business Development Centers since the program's inception in 1986. UND is a state-controlled public institution of Higher Education, established in 1883. It is the state of North Dakota's flagship research university.

The ND SBDC serves entrepreneurs and small business owners in all 53 counties in North Dakota through eight service centers located in Bismarck, Bowman, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, Minot, and Williston. These service centers are the main service delivery point for network programs and services. The Lead Center is located on UND's campus within the Center for Business Engagement & Development in the Nistler College of Business & Public Administration, providing administrative oversight and support services for the network. The State Director is responsible for developing program goals and performance expectations. The State Director and Associate/Assistant State Director, as a leadership team, develop and articulate the current and future strategy of the network and oversee operations and budgets.

The network has historically operated with 8 to 10 active service centers spread throughout North Dakota to create an effective service delivery system for all small business communities in the state. Each service center is staffed by a Business Advisor or Center Director with specialized training and expertise in general business ownership and management so they can provide confidential, one-on-one business advising for clients along with high-quality training for clients and other partners, such as business referral sources like lenders and Economic Development organizations. Strong candidates for these positions have owned or have experience managing a small business. The Lead Center, in addition to offering guidance and support to all service centers, provides program and fiscal oversight and ensures compliance of standards on behalf of the SBDC cooperative agreement with the federal government.

The ND SBDC operates with two different types of service centers, host (UND employees) service centers and sub-recipient (contracted, non-UND employee) service centers. The State Director has direct reporting relationships with the Center Directors who are employed by UND. The Assistant/Associate State Director (ASD) has direct oversight of the subaward relationships, where program funding, requirements, goals, and expectations are outlined in the subaward agreement document to the host entity. These two different types of service centers provide different strengths for the network. Local host entities can help garner community support and buy-in for the program and services with key stakeholders in that region. UND hosted centers can assist with administrative and programmatic guidance across the network due to their direct reporting relationship to the Lead Center. All centers establish linkages in the community to promote the service center and allow advisors to understand the needs of the service area, its specific referral sources, and local clients.

Each service center staff person is responsible for administration of their service center. This includes ensuring that their center meets the goals and milestones allocated to their center each year, maintaining center operations, and building client relationships and regional outreach. This work is done in alignment with the program requirements/expectations and in

support of network strategic objectives, while still allowing some flexibility to tailor and customize program delivery to their region.

The ND SBDC network is one network striving to reach network-wide goals, and while each service center plays an important role in achieving our goals, we do not compete with each other. Strengthening the connections between our geographically dispersed staff and building a strong team that supports and respects each other has been a major focus in recent years and will always be a necessary component for our network and an integral part of how we will continue to surpass our performance goals and be successful in the future.

Funding

The administration of network and program budgets is the responsibility of the Lead Center, which monitors spending by the individual service centers. Funding begins at the federal level.

SBA and DoD Funding Opportunity Announcements: Each year the Lead Center receives a funding opportunity announcement from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs (DoD OSBP) outlining anticipated federal allocation and requirements for the ND SBDC (SBA \$), VBOC of the Dakotas (SBA \$), ND APEX Accelerator (DoD \$) programs. The Lead Center then consults with the program host (UND) and compares the previous year's budget to actual expenditures and, in consultation with Center Directors, prepares a proposed budget allocating specific funds for each service center based on available funding, past performance, goals outlined in the Strategic Plan, and special needs identified by network staff through interaction with local partners. The Lead Center then works with UND, SBA, and DoD to prepare and submit an annual proposal for each program.

State and Local Funding: Two of the three programs in the ND Network require what the federal government refers to as "non-federal match," also known as "sponsorship," or "contributions." The federal programs are structured this way, to include state and local dollars, because while service centers contribute to the economic growth of the whole state, the most visible impacts of program services are in the local communities.

The ND SBDC program requires 1:1 non-federal match from state/local sources to the federal funds received; for every federal dollar there must be a matching state/local dollar. SBA requires the match must be at minimum 50% cash. The other 50% (or remaining percentage <50%) can be made up of in-kind value (e.g., if SBA awards us \$500,000, we must have *at least* \$250,000 in cash from state/local supporters, and another \$250,000 of in-kind contributions). It is not uncommon that our ND SBDC network budgets and expends more than the required state/ local match, as it costs more to operate the program effectively and meet the needs of our state. The ND APEX Accelerator program currently requires budgeting and expending funds at a 65:35 federal to non-federal ratio. The Defense Logistics Agency does not break down the match to cash and in-kind to the same degree as SBA. The VBOC program requires no federal match.

To match federal dollars, state/local dollars come from multiple sources. The North Dakota Department of Commerce allocates funds to the ND SBDC and ND APEX Accelerator programs

and awards the Lead Center state funds as a match. As Lead Center host, the University of North Dakota provides local match for the ND SBDC and ND APEX Accelerator programs as well. Local funds must be raised by the service centers to support local service center operations and meet the SBA match requirement. These dollars typically come from county or city governments, EDCs, JDAs, and lending institutions.

Service Center Funding: Contracted service centers, which are not staffed by UND employees, are awarded SBA funds to operate through a subaward agreement with UND. Agreements and funding are normally awarded for a 12-month period to the service center's hosting institution/entity for operation of the ND SBDC service center. Subrecipients are invited to re-commit for the ND SBDC award and must submit an annual budget and proposal to UND and the Lead Center when the funding opportunity is released by SBA outlining the next award year program requirements. To receive funding, service centers must plan and coordinate programs consistent with the goals and objectives of SBA (ND SBDC) and the ND network's strategic plan.

All expenditures made on behalf of the ND SBDC program are reported to and then reviewed and audited by the Lead Center to ensure that all costs are necessary, reasonable, and allowable under federal and local regulations. All expenses (cash and in-kind) must be categorized into one of the standard and approved budget categories. The budgets provided to/by service centers must be a blend of federal and state/local monies.

In 2017, ND SBDC leadership configured the number of service centers and the amount of 'effort' that service center staff members devote to client advising services based on a unique model and matrix developed after conducting a national survey of similar federal SBDC networks. This funding matrix is used each year to calculate service center funding allocations based on several inputs including prior year outcomes, FTEs, geographic reach, and demographic data. This matrix is revised slightly each year dependent on obtained outcomes, and funding shifts. Now that it has been in place for the few years, the scoring and resulting funding allocation ranges have been consistent for all service centers.

Section Six: Guiding Strategies and Network Principles

MISSION: Powering the creation, growth, and success of small business in North Dakota.

VISION: ND SBDC will...

... Be the leading provider of business expertise, recognized for excellence in service to North Dakota businesses and entrepreneurs.

... Be the catalyst for business development and growth, leveraging our resources to ensure positive economic results that strengthen our local communities.

VALUES:

<p>EXCELLENCE</p> <p>As a nationally accredited network, we are held to the highest quality standards, focusing on continuous improvement and growth for our clients and ourselves; providing innovative services and expertise with proven, sustainable impacts.</p>	<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>We pride ourselves on building purposeful relationships with our clients, our partners, and one another. The work we do is client-driven, reflecting their goals, journey, and timeline to help them reach their full potential. We are committed to their long-term success.</p>
<p>INTEGRITY</p> <p>Being responsible, credible, and objective is the foundation of all we do. We hold ourselves to high ethical standards, demonstrating confidentiality and accountability with the resources and information entrusted to us.</p>	<p>CULTURE</p> <p>We embrace a learning culture that recognizes the importance of others' expertise, talents, experiences, and needs; encouraging personal and professional growth while appreciating diversity in all matters, extending courtesy, dignity, and respect.</p>

Position

ND SBDC credentialed advisors empower North Dakota's small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive.

Strategic Plan

Every three to five years the ND SBDC Network develops a strategic plan. Below is a quick overview of the main objectives of the 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. The full and current strategic plan with measures of success, actions, timeframes, etc. will be updated regularly and sent to Advisory board members for review.

First Strategic Focus Area: Capacity/Human Capital

Vision of Success: Optimal means to meet demand

Strategies: Professional Development, Organizational Model, Prioritizing our People

Second Strategic Focus Area: Intentional Partnerships

Vision of Success: Vested and mutually beneficial relationships

Strategies: Ecosystem, Strategic Positioning, Funding Strategy

Third Strategic Focus Area: Performance Excellence

Vision of Success: Be the *Model Network*

Strategies: Continuous Improvement, Thought Leadership

Section Seven: Additional Resources and Documents

Facts about the ND SBDC

- [#DidYouKnow Information Sheet](#)

National Network Information

- [America's SBDC](#)
- [APEX Accelerators Program](#)
- [Association of PTACs](#)
- [VBOC Program](#)

Annual Reports

- [ND SBDC Network Annual Report 2022](#)