



Calhoun County  
Economic Development Corp.

## [ CALHOUN COUNTY ]

# Collaborating for the **FUTURE**

2024-26 STRATEGIC PLAN | SUMMARIZED

*The Calhoun County Economic Development Corporation is a non-profit organization formed to undertake a unified economic development effort within Calhoun County Iowa. Assistance is provided to community organizations in their pursuit of local development efforts.*

### **MISSION**

Enhance business retention, start-up, and growth, so as to increase both employment opportunities and the tax base. The organization also devotes resources to improve quality of life and to promote the county as a desirable place to live and work.

Prepared by



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## OVERVIEW

The Calhoun County Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) recognized the essential need to develop a comprehensive 3-year strategic plan, envisioning a trajectory that not only addresses identified needs but also aspires to elevate the landscape of economic development in Calhoun County. In pursuit of this vision, the CCEDC engaged Emerge Marketing Solutions to collaboratively develop the 2024-26 CCEDC Strategic Plan. This strategic blueprint is poised to enact positive transformations, aligning the organization with its core priorities and fostering sustainable economic development in Calhoun County.

## PILLARS OF SUCCESS

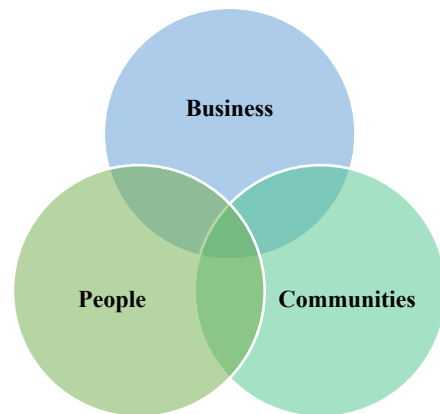
CCEDC has identified three pillars of success that will establish a strong foundation for the organization. No matter which priority is identified or prioritized, these core components working together will help CCEDC fulfill its mission effectively.

- **Collaboration:** We will build synergistic partnerships for collective success.
- **Communication:** We will ensure effective two-way communication with stakeholders.
- **Capacity Building:** We will build capacity by investing in our people, resulting in a robust community and workforce.

**COLLABORATION / COMMUNICATION / CAPACITY BUILDING**

## COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

In an effort to be most successful, it is imperative that the CCEDC has engaged leadership through collaboration and partnerships; leadership development; and succession planning. The organization will leverage the efforts of the state’s economic development strategy and take a three-pronged approach to economic development that involves the businesses, communities, and people that make up Calhoun County. In all efforts outlined in this plan, a three-way partnership should be explored for greatest impact and synergies.





## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### Priority #1 - Existing Business Support

Research has shown that nearly 80% of new job growth and investment within a community comes from businesses that are already located there. This makes business retention and expansion efforts an integral part of our economic development strategy. (According to the Center on Budget & Policy Priorities, “to create jobs and build strong economies, focus on producing more home-grown entrepreneurs and on helping startups and young, fast-growing firms already located in the state/community to survive and to grow — not on cutting taxes and trying to lure businesses from other states.”)

**Objective 1.1: Gain a thorough understanding of the business climate in Calhoun County.**

**Objective 1.2: Develop a comprehensive database (CRM) to track short- and long-term economic development opportunities.**

**Objective 1.3: Implement consistent communications to strengthen relationships, build trust & leverage support between CCEDC and stakeholders.**

**Objective 1.4: Serve as a resource hub for business financing opportunities.**

**Objective 1.5: Leverage local, regional, and statewide resources for business incubation, acceleration, and growth.**

### Priority #2 Workforce Preparedness

Prioritizing workforce preparedness in rural Iowa is vital for economic vitality, diversity, and adaptation to global trends. According to recent data, a well-prepared workforce attracts business, fostering growth and supporting community resilience. In Iowa and furthermore Calhoun County, where agricultural and technological sectors intersect, workforce readiness is especially crucial. Skilled individuals reduce unemployment, encourage entrepreneurship, and enhance stability, preventing outmigration. The investment in workforce preparedness is strategic, addressing challenges and improving the overall well-being of our local communities not only today, but in preparation for future challenges/changes in the workplace. This proactive approach ensures economic development, sustains a skilled, resilient workforce, and will contribute to Calhoun County’s long-term success.

**Objective 2.1: Foster collaborations between existing industry and educational institutions to enhance development opportunities for existing workforce.**

**Objective 2.2: Foster collaborations between existing industry and educational institutions to enhance workforce preparedness for graduating students.**

**Objective 2.3: Replicate successful workforce attraction efforts in Calhoun County.**

### Priority #3 Community Development & Capacity Building

Community development in a rural context encompasses a multifaceted approach aimed at enhancing the overall well-being, sustainability, and quality of life for residents in rural areas. Since quality of life is leading to job selection, it is imperative that investments in the county are made to ensure residents enjoy the communities they live and/or work in. Additionally, with the aging population of Calhoun County, it is necessary to build capacity among the next generation of community leaders to ensure success and longevity within the private and public sectors.



**Objective 3.1: Identify local partnership & funding opportunities that enhance the ability of CCEDC to stimulate community development.**

**Objective 3.2: Cultivate engaged leaders across the county and beyond by initiating a Leadership Calhoun program.**

**Objective 3.3: Facilitate a multi-faceted housing initiative in Calhoun County.**

**Objective 3.4: Advocate for investments in quality-of-life amenities and services, as these are the leading driver for workforce attraction and a predictor of economic vitality.**

## **Priority #4 Business Attraction & Recruitment**

Business attraction and recruitment are critical priorities for Calhoun County Economic Development, particularly for creating high-quality jobs that bolster the county's tax base and meet the demands of modern families and younger generations. This strategic focus not only addresses housing affordability challenges but also mitigates trailing spouse issues and enhances small business sustainability. By attracting businesses that provide well-paying opportunities, Calhoun County can foster economic growth, community vibrancy, and a desirable "quality of place" that appeals to a diverse and skilled workforce.

**Objective 4.1: Develop the Calhoun County Business Park**

**Objective 4.2: Support Communities with Ordinance Recommendations**

**Objective 4.3: Re-visioning Abandoned Buildings – Flipping Calhoun**

**Objective 4.4: Catalyst Grants – City & County Collaboration**