

FIND THE
goodlife
in North Dakota

RURAL TOOLKIT

CREATED BY  **ROLECALL**

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PILLARS OF

READINESS



GOAL:

**CONVENE, ENGAGE, AND TRAIN RURAL LEADERS ACROSS THE
STATE TO ENSURE THE EFFICACY AND IMPACT OF FTGL
PROGRAMMING AND MARKETING EFFORTS.**

The following 'Pillars of Readiness' can act as a check list
to see if a rural community is ready to receive talent.
Communities in need of more support to become talent-
ready can use this toolkit as a guide.

① READY TO **ATTRACT** TALENT.

✓ **COMMUNITY BRANDING & STORYTELLING**

Community has a clear and compelling identity that showcases the community's unique strengths and assets.

✓ **MARKETING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Has existing marketing tools (website, social media, etc.) to effectively engage new talent.

✓ **JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

Open positions available and businesses actively hiring in the area.

✓ **COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS**

At least two trained champions within your community ready to assist incoming talent with the right resources for housing, childcare, education, healthcare, safety, and more.

- **1 REPRESENTATIVE** who will work with the state on resources and acts as the primary point person.
- **1 COMMUNITY CHAMPION** who will connect with incoming talent to help answer questions and serve as a friendly community connection.

② READY TO RECEIVE TALENT.

WELCOMING PROGRAMS

Events and/or programs designed to help newcomers integrate into the community.

ACCESSIBLE HOUSING & AMENITIES

Available housing and accessible essential services such as healthcare, schools, shopping, etc.

LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Ways to connect and build your network like chambers of commerce, local community groups, religious communities, etc.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Employers are connected to community ambassador(s) and actively engaged in connecting incoming talent to them.

③ READY TO **PARTICIPATE** IN FIND THE GOOD LIFE.

ALIGNMENT WITH FTGL GOALS

Rural champions and leadership align with FTGL's vision, understanding and supporting the program's messaging and overarching goals.

ENGAGED IN STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

Ready to promote FTGL programming and marketing efforts within the community to ensure community buy-in.

ACCOUNTABILITY & TRACKING

Prepared to measure and report on community's involvement and impact.

FTGL COMMUNITY CHAMPION TRAINING

Rural champions have completed the community champions training with FTGL.

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HOW TO:

BE A COMMUNITY CHAMPION



WHAT MAKES A *GOOD* COMMUNITY CHAMPION

1

Loves the great state of North Dakota.



2

Passionate about their community, demonstrated through involvement and enthusiasm.



3

Happy to share interests and community insights with prospective residents.
(i.e. outdoor recreation, sports, clubs, volunteering)



5

Able and willing to give insight on local housing, education, and community amenities.



4

Able to discuss local employers (in addition to their own employer) in a positive, honest, and informative way.





WHAT IS THE *ROLE* OF A COMMUNITY CHAMPION

WE ASK ALL COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS TO COMMIT TO:

1

Attend quarterly meetings to receive assignments, share feedback and success stories, and connect with each other.

4

Report key details to the state. Did you get an influx of inquiries? Did your connection move to the area? Fill us in!

2

Contact leads within 3 business days and maintain communication as needed.

5

Attend year-end town hall to recap the first year of the program.

3

Connect leads to relevant resources, such as employers, community groups, real estate agents, schools, etc.



WHAT IS THE *PROCESS* FOR A COMMUNITY CHAMPION



1. We have an inquiry!

Great news. Someone is interested in your community! Sara from FTGL will share the person's contact information.



2. Time to get in touch

Contact the lead within 3 business days to catch them while their inquiry is still fresh.



3. Schedule your conversation

Schedule a 15-minute call to discuss their potential relocation to North Dakota. Don't forget to **copy Sara** (ssperling@nd.gov) on your initial outreach.



4. Follow up

Follow-up with an email providing relevant resources or connections. Share a recap of your conversation and forward all relevant communications to Sara (ssperling@nd.gov) and/or [Hubspot](#).

BONUS: If your contact comes to town, meet up! Meaningful connections make moving easier and more likely.



WHAT WE WILL *PROVIDE* FOR YOU

WE ENSURE YOU'RE SET UP FOR SUCCESS FROM THE VERY BEGINNING BY PROVIDING:

- Detailed information about incoming leads
- Email templates for easy outreach
- Resource library template for you to fill with relevant information including:
 - Contact information for major employers
 - Real Estate Agents and Property Managers
 - Moving companies
 - School and education resources
 - Links to ND Tourism's Things to Do pages
 - Incentives and programs that could benefit candidates
- State-level support from Sara Sperling (ssperling@nd.gov) for tough questions and additional resources



TEMPLATES FOR SUCCESS

LINKS TO TEMPLATES FOR COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS:



Emails to Leads

[Google Drive Link](#)

The link above will take you to a template email to send to a person who made an inquiry. Personalize it to your heart's content!



Call Script

[Google Drive Link](#)

Here's a guide to what community champions can talk about on calls with potential newcomers.



Lead Follow-up Worksheet

[Google Drive Link](#)

This worksheet will help you organize key details about your lead and plan your follow-up strategy.



Lead Tracking Worksheet

[Google Drive Link](#)

Duplicate this lead tracking worksheet to use for each lead, helping you stay organized and track your follow-ups and progress.

You can request Microsoft Word and Excel file links directly from Sara Sperling at ssperling@nd.gov.

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RURAL RESOURCE GUIDE



HOW TO USE THE *RELOCATION RESOURCE GUIDE*

Fill out this [relocation resource guide template](#) to share with incoming talent. The resource guide includes information to help incoming talent find housing, healthcare, educational resources and more.

1. Fill it out
2. Save as a PDF
3. Share widely!
4. Revisit it regularly to include up-to-date information

[Google Drive Link](#)

Prefer not to use Google?

You can request a Microsoft Word link directly from Sara Sperling at ssperling@nd.gov.



MAXIMIZING RESOURCES

Attracting people to your community can feel challenging, especially for small organizations with limited budgets. With creativity, connections, and strategic thinking, you can maximize your impact.

The following are actionable steps tailored to address common challenges in talent attraction for our rural partners.

GET READY TO *ATTRACT* TALENT!



TAILOR YOUR MESSAGE

Craft personalized messages referencing shared interests, specific opportunities, or success stories from people who have moved to your community.

ACTION STEP 1

Write down what you love about your community and share it. Does it resonate with others?

ACTION STEP 2

Reach out to a recent newcomer and ask what they like and found challenging in your community. Use their feedback to improve the newcomer experience.



FIND YOUR STORY

Community Branding: Google yourself! How does your community show up? What organizations are prominent? Where can people learn more about your community? Do the available websites, social media, and marketing materials clearly showcase your town's strengths?

ACTION STEP

Reach out to those organizations that have the most prominent messaging about your community, like local employers and community spaces, and collaborate to craft shared stories.

GET READY TO *RECEIVE* TALENT!



ENGAGE LOCAL CHAMPIONS

Recruit 2-3 approachable, knowledgeable individuals to participate in talent attraction efforts and educate residents on welcoming newcomers while sharing insider tips, from the best parks to local traditions, fostering a welcoming environment.

ACTION STEP 1

Organize a “Welcoming 101” session to coach residents on sharing community knowledge and avoiding assumptions.

ACTION STEP 2

Gather ‘insider tips’ through interviews or casual conversations to bridge gaps between newcomers and seasoned residents.

(Tip: If you're short on capacity, enlist a volunteer or partner organization to lead. Engaged locals make the best advocates.)



FIND A CONTACT FOR KEY TOPICS

Schools, childcare, and housing are key priorities for newcomers. Identify community members or local ambassadors to pair newcomers with who can provide up-to-date insights, guidance, and support.

ACTION STEP 1

Create a list of key topics for newcomers and identify knowledgeable community members to provide answers.

ACTION STEP 2

Pull together a directory of volunteers, noting their interests and expertise, to easily match them with newcomers.



STAY ENGAGED WITH PROSPECTIVE RESIDENTS

Keep in touch with leads through personalized emails or calls.

ACTION STEP 1

Set a weekly schedule to follow up with incoming talent, share job opportunities and events, connect them with volunteers, respond to emails, and help welcome them into the community.



Focus on **personal connections** and **clear communication**. Even small gestures like a welcoming email or an invitation to coffee can leave a lasting impression.

By addressing these actionable steps, your organization will be ready to attract and retain talent. When in doubt, utilize resources shared by Find the Good Life.

Questions?

Reach out to Sara Sperling at **ssperling@nd.gov**.



MARKETING TOOLS AUDIT CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to ensure your community's digital tools—website, social media, and more—are ready to engage potential residents.

WEBSITE AUDIT



BRANDING & MESSAGING

- ☐ Logos, color schemes, and fonts are consistent.
- ☐ Clear value proposition prominently displayed (e.g., “Discover Your New Home in [City Name]”).
- ☐ Inclusive and welcoming language throughout.



CONTENT & NAVIGATION

- ☐ Up-to-date information about events, news, and community services.
- ☐ Key resources accessible within 1-2 clicks (schools, healthcare, parks, etc.).
- ☐ High-quality images, videos, or virtual tours that accurately represent your community.
- ☐ Mobile-friendly and responsive design, tested on multiple devices (mobile, tablet, desktop).
- ☐ Optional: Create a "Move to [City Name]" or "New Resident" page with housing, education, FAQs, and other community information.



ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ Contact information is easy and quick to find (email, phone, address).
- ☐ Clear calls-to-action (e.g., “Contact Us,” “Download Our Relocation Guide”).
- ☐ Functional, user-friendly contact forms routed to the correct email addresses.
- ☐ Email newsletter sign-up prominently featured and functional.
- ☐ Relocation guides, brochures, or community PDFs available to download.



SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of enhancing a website's content and structure to improve its visibility on search engine results pages. The goal is to rank higher for relevant keywords, making your site easier to find and driving more traffic from search engines.

Effective SEO is about integrating keywords naturally into authentic, relevant, and valuable content. Be patient; success takes time!



TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SEO:

- ☐ Find the *right* keywords and not just high volume keywords.
 - Think about user intent
 - “Best restaurant” vs. “Ethiopian restaurant near me”
 - “Best places to live” vs. “Midwestern city with great parks”
 - Use these keywords to guide your content, focusing on terms people already search for in Google’s “People also ask” section related to your community.
- ☐ Use keywords in: headings, blogs, videos, social posts, comment engagement, dinner conversations, texts to your friends, **everywhere!**

OTHER DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES



GOOGLE & GOOGLE MAPS

- ☐ Refresh city and landmark images with high-quality, current photos. Remove outdated imagery. [Here's how to post photo updates.](#)
- ☐ Review the “About” section for accuracy and submit updates via the “Feedback” button. [Learn how to provide feedback in Google Maps.](#)
- ☐ Ensure your organization’s profile is up-to-date with accurate address, hours, and imagery. [Edit your Google Business Profile here.](#)
- ☐ Respond to positive and negative reviews professionally.



WIKIPEDIA

- ☐ Update your city’s “About” section for accuracy using the “Edit” button on your profile.
- ☐ Replace outdated photos with high-quality images that showcase the city’s current appeal.



NEWSLETTER

- ☐ Ensure the layout, fonts, and colors match your community’s branding.
- ☐ Include engaging and relevant articles about local events, achievements, or initiatives.
- ☐ Use current and relevant high-quality images to make the newsletter visually appealing.
- ☐ Ensure the newsletter looks great on both desktop and mobile devices.
- ☐ Provide call-to-action links to event registrations, articles, social media links related to content highlighted for further engagement.

SOCIAL MEDIA AUDIT



PROFILE OPTIMIZATION

- ☐ Profile and cover images are clear, high-quality, and consistent across platforms.
 - ☐ **Profile image:** Create a 1080x1080px graphic that includes a clear, recognizable logo or image that represents your community's identity.
 - ☐ **Cover image:** Select a vibrant, high-quality image that reflects the community's spirit, such as a group gathering, or a notable landmark.
- ☐ About/Info sections are complete, accurate, and are consistent with website.
 - ☐ **About section:** Include a brief, welcoming community description.
 - ☐ **Contact information:** Provide a phone number, email, and website URL for easy inquiries.
- ☐ Links to website and key community resources are included in bios.



CONTENT & ENGAGEMENT

- ☐ Consistent posting schedule (2-3/week) featuring local events, job opportunities, attractions, etc.
 - ☐ **Newsfeed images:** Maintain consistent quality, branding colors, and style to create a cohesive look.
- ☐ Respond to comments and messages.
- ☐ Tag local organizations/businesses.



SOCIAL MEDIA RESOURCE GUIDE

This guide helps your community use social media to attract and welcome new residents by showcasing local charm, resources, and relocation tips, fostering engagement and belonging before they arrive.



SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES



AUTHENTICITY IS KEY:

Showcase your community—celebrate its small-town charm, traditions, and the people who make it special. Share event highlights, local business spotlights, and testimonials from residents.



VIBRANT IMAGES:

Use high-quality photos or videos showcasing your community—scenic views, bustling storefronts, kids at the park, or nature trails. Authentic, **people-focused** images resonate better than cluttered graphics.

Don't be afraid to crowdsource images from people in your community!

Check the social media content ideas section for Canva templates to customize. Canva is a free, easy-to-use tool with versatile design options.

GOOD PHOTOS ARE PEOPLE CENTRIC



Why it's **good**:

- Shows atmosphere
- Shows faces! Look how happy they are to be at this festival!



Why it's **good**:

- Sometimes you can't get photos of interesting spaces AND people. Put multiple photos together to make this happen.



Why it's **good**:

- Shows action and a crowd
- Shows faces of at least a few people

RULE OF THUMB:
FACES STOP THE SCROLL.

photo credits: Kelly Klein Photography

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BAD PHOTOS ARE MISSING PERSONALITY



Why is this considered a **“bad”** photo?

- Empty streets are less likely to draw in interest.
- Dark lighting drains energy.

How to make it **better**:

- Add people!
- If it's an empty street, emphasize the architecture on a brighter day with an interesting angle.



Why is this considered a **“bad”** photo?

- There's no energy or sense of community without people enjoying the space.
- It looks like a setup for a photo shoot rather than a lively, real moment.

How to make it **better**:

- Add people!
- If it's a restaurant, show food. If it's an event space, show an event. Show spaces in action!

BEST PRACTICES



CONSISTENT POSTING SCHEDULE:

Aim to post at least 2-3 times per week. Consistency keeps your content on followers' newsfeeds and shows that your community is active and engaged.

But if you don't have anything to say, don't force it. It's better to have quality than quantity.

Call to Action



CALL-TO-ACTIONS (CTAs):

A call-to-action is a simple prompt encouraging your audience to take a specific step, such as visiting your website, attending an event, or sharing your post. CTAs can be as simple as "Join us this Saturday," or "Tag a friend who would love this!"

Including clear CTAs in your captions guides your audience on what to do next and helps boost engagement.



LEVERAGE HASHTAGS AND LOCATION TAGS:

Use hashtags (#YourTownName, #RuralND, #FindtheGoodLifeND) to increase visibility. Tag your location so people searching for North Dakota rural communities can easily find you.



SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT IDEAS

Use these templates for a simple and clean social media campaign. You can personalize them to reflect your community.

[LINK TO CANVA PAGES](#)

LOCAL AMENITIES & ATTRACTIONS



EXAMPLE



Community Hubs

Showcase the town library, community center, playgrounds, and parks.

Images

A wide shot of the community hub and/or people utilizing the hub (i.e. an image of kids playing on the playground).

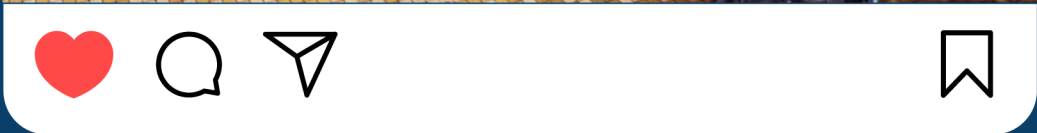
Caption

“Sunny days, friendly faces, and open spaces—this is life in [City Name]. Our beautiful community park is the heart of our gatherings and outdoor fun.”

LOCAL AMENITIES & ATTRACTIONS



EXAMPLE



Business & Organization Highlights

Highlight local restaurants, boutiques, other businesses, and organizations.

Background Images

A street view of the business, full team photo, and/or people eating, shopping, etc. in the business.

Captions

- “🌟 Business Spotlight: [Tag: Company Name]🌟
Meet the faces behind @ [Business Name]! Discover the story of this family-owned gem that’s been serving [City Name] for generations. From delicious treats to heartwarming service, they’re a true community treasure. Share your favorite stories about [Business Name] in the comments below!
- Be sure to check them out ➡ [Insert website link or address]”
- “[Tag: Business Name] is more than just a business—it’s a cornerstone of our community. They’re dedicated to serving [local needs] and making our town a better place! [Owner/Worker Name] will always make sure you have what you need & that you leave with a smile on your face. Share your favorite stories about [Business Name] in the comments below!

Be sure to check them out ➡ [Insert website link or address]”

AVAILABLE HOUSING



EXAMPLE



Available Properties

Showcase available homes for sale or rental units. Include basic details and direct interested viewers to a link/contact to learn more.

Images

A well lit wide shot of the property and or multiple images of the inside of the property.

Caption

“Looking for a place to put down roots? Explore this charming home in [City Name].

Contact [Realtor Name/Link] to learn more!”

COMMUNITY EVENTS



EXAMPLE



Monthly Previews

At the start of each month, share a calendar of upcoming events—concerts, craft fairs, school sports matches, or seasonal festivals.

Caption

“In [City Name], there’s always something to celebrate! From [event] to [event], we know how to have fun! Mark your calendars—be sure to check out our upcoming events this month!

[list event, time, locations here]

(i.e. Join us on [Date] at [Local Event Name] for music, treats, and celebration @ [Location]!”

Stand-Alone Events

Leading up to bigger festivals, create dedicated posts with event details, highlights from previous years, and volunteer sign-up info. (Tip: If using Facebook, publish upcoming events as an “Event”)

Images

Snapshots from previous events.

TESTIMONIALS

("MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR" SERIES)



Longtime Resident

Spotlight residents who have lived in the town for decades. Ask them to share their favorite memories and what makes the community special.

New Resident

Feature posts with recent movers. Ask them why they chose your town, how they settled in, and what they love most so far.

Images

Photo of a new or longtime resident/family.

Captions

“Meet [Resident Name], they recently moved to [City Name] in search of a welcoming & tight-knit community. Her journey from [Previous City] is one of new beginnings and adventure. Discover why they fell in love with [City Name] and see why maybe [City Name] is the perfect place for you too! **Insert quote from resident**”

“In [City Name], we value having a community that cares deeply for one another. Meet [Resident Name], they opened [Local Business Name] and have fostered a strong relationship with every customer that comes through. If you’re looking for a place where you can always count on your neighbors, then [City Name] might be the perfect fit for you. **Insert quote from resident**”

CURRENT JOB OPPORTUNITIES



EXAMPLE



Available Jobs

Highlight current job openings in the area on a monthly basis.

In-Depth Spotlight

Highlight a particular employer or position, detailing the role and how it supports the community.

Images

Local storefront or aerial snapshot of community.

Caption

“Looking for a career or lifestyle change? Discover exciting careers and find your dream job right here in [City Name]!”

Here are current job openings:

- Job title at company
- Job title at company
- Job title at company”

GENERAL UPDATES



EXAMPLE



Newsletter

Share your town’s digital newsletter as a post. Summarize key headlines and link to the full version.

Holiday Greetings

These are best if they include community traditions like festivals, decorations, or local food.

Celebrate Achievements

Did the local high school team make it to state finals? Did a youth group organize a successful cleanup day? Celebrate these wins publicly.

Images

Share related community images that are well lit and preferably include 1-3 people.

Captions

- Check out our latest [Month] newsletter to be in-the-know about what our [Community] is up to!
This month we look at...
 - Community News #1
 - Community News #2Read more here: [insert newsletter link]”
- “Come for the charm, stay for the traditions. In [City Name] we value celebrating the rich history and that includes food! This holiday, a community essential is [insert food item]. Where do you pick up your favorite [insert food item]?”
- “Congratulations to the [City Name High School] basketball team for making it to the state championships! Your hard work makes our community proud.”