



Annual Meeting  
January 22, 2026

# **BEP Annual Membership Meeting**

## **Meeting Agenda**

**January 22, 2026**

7:30 – 7:45 Breakfast & Networking

7:45-7:55 Introductions

7:55-8:00 Election of New Business Board Member

8:00-8:10 Breakfast Sponsor Recognition: KJohnson Construction

8:10-8:20 Benton Economic Partnership 2025 Recap-Amanda Othoudt  
Taste of Benton County Event

**BEP EDGE Circle**

8:20-8:50 Guest Speakers: Benton County Business Owners' Success Stories

8:50 – 9:00 Questions and Adjourn

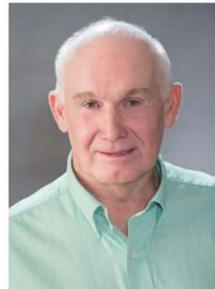
\*BEP Board Meeting to Follow



# INTRODUCTIONS

# 2025 Board of Directors of Benton Economic Partnership, Inc.

- ▶ Sandra Saldana, President
- ▶ Kevin Johnson, Vice President
- ▶ John Herges, Past President
- ▶ Pat Welty, Treasurer
- ▶ Jake Bauerly, Founding Member
- ▶ Ed Popp, County Representative
- ▶ Jesse Arndt, Township Representative
- ▶ Tim Reuter, Business Representative
- ▶ Dan Posthumus, School Representative
- ▶ Cathy Mehelich, City Representative
- ▶ Brandon Voit, Chamber Representative



# **Thank You for Your Leadership and Service**

**Jake Bauerly  
Founding Board Member  
2016-2025**

As a Founding Board Member, your vision, dedication, and commitment helped lay the foundation for our organization's success.

We are deeply grateful for your service and wish you continued success in all that lies ahead.



## Public and private plan to pool for county's greater good

by NATASHA BARBER  
STAFF WRITER

### BENTON COUNTY

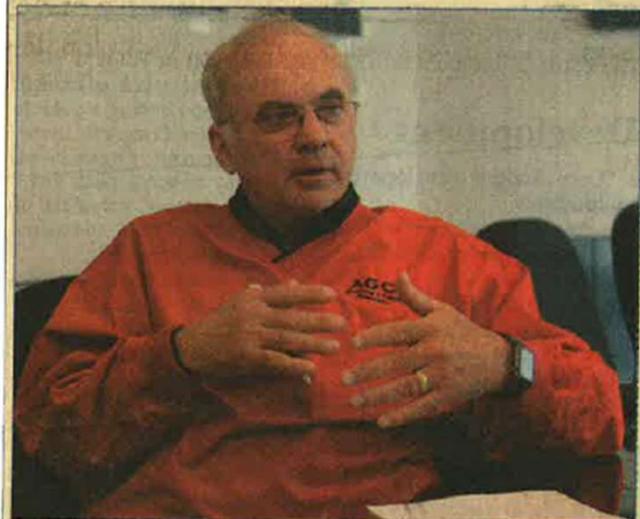
With the completion of Hwy 23's four traffic lanes to and from Foley, a new overpass on Hwy 10 in Rice, and the expansion of County Road 3 through Sauk Rapids scheduled to begin construction in May, it's easy for residents to see Benton County is making changes.

But road construction projects aren't the only things on people's minds — Benton County wants development. And a non-profit organization might just be the solution.

Over the next year, residents dedicated to the newly-formed Benton County Economic Development Organization will pool their resources and time in

**Development**  
continued on pg. 2

**PHOTO BY NATASHA BARBER**  
Allen "Jake" Bauerly, Benton County District 5 Commissioner, spoke about the formation of a non-profit organization to create economic development in Benton County on Feb. 10. The non-profit will be a conglomerate of government and private sector members.



## Benton Economic Partnership selects board

DUELML — The Benton Economic Partnership (BEP) held its first organizational meeting at Jack and Jim's Event Center in Dassel July 21.

Over 70 people attended the breakfast meeting where members to BEP and those interested in becoming supporters of the infant organization gathered for the kick-off event.

The BEP's mission was introduced by District 5 Benton County Commissioner Jake Bauerly. Bauerly detailed the background of why a group came together to form an economic partnership within the county and announced BEP had reached 99 percent of its first-year funding goal of \$150,000.

"I can sense by the size of this group here today that there are a lot of people who care about Benton County and are willing to give their time, energy and resources



**PHOTO BY NATASHA BARBER**

The Benton Economic Partnership selected its board of directors — (front row, from left) president John Herges, vice president Sandy Saldana, Laura Kangas and Jake Bauerly; (back row, from left) Ed Popp, secretary/treasurer Jonathan Brenny, Kevin Johnson and Butch Thell — on July 21. They will all serve as board members.

ing had recruited almost 50 Ed Popp (township), Butch tors held their first official

# Cheers to a lot of great years!

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# **2026 Election of New Benton Economic Partnership, Inc. Board Members**

Candice  
Kantor





**Benton Economic Partnership, Inc.  
Annual Breakfast Sponsor**



# BENTON

## Economic Partnership, Inc.

Benton Economic Partnership, Inc.  
Recap of 2025

# Increase Awareness of BEP, Retain and Grow BEP Membership

## Members Drive BEP

We ended 2025 with 131 Members

### 2025 Recap of our Membership Meetings

- **January** – Breakfast Sponsor was Bay West; Guest Speakers were our County and City Representatives.
- **April** – Breakfast Sponsor, William Dingman Family Funeral Home; Guest Speaker Arron Brossoit from Golden Shovel, on AI.
- **July** – Breakfast Sponsor, CentraCare; Guest Speaker, Darold Berreau from SCORE.
- **October** – Breakfast Sponsor, Frandsen Bank & Trust; Guest Speaker, Angie Dalhe from Career Solutions

### BRE Visits

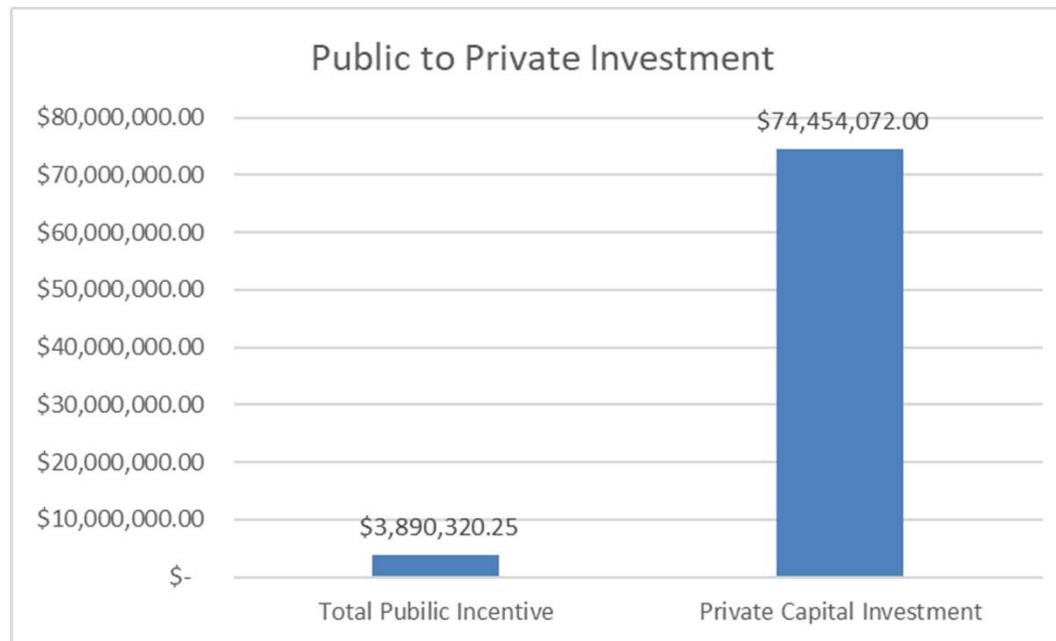
- We completed 24 Business Visits in 2025

### Sauk Rapids Herald

- BEP writes a monthly article on Economic Development and promotes resources for our community.

# Expand or build businesses in Benton County.

- New and Expanding Projects in the County
- Since 2020, BEP leveraged over \$3.8M in public (state and local) incentives, which resulted in over \$74.4M in private capital investment.



# Expand or build businesses in Benton County.

- These projects result in the retention of 547 jobs and the creation of 185 new FT jobs for the county.
- Average Hourly Wage of Retained Workers: \$25.79/hour
- Average Hourly Wage of New Workers: \$27.33/hour
- **BEP manages the County's Revolving Loan Fund Program**
  - 5 Loans Out and 1 Pending Closing.
  - 2025 Ending Cash Balance: \$836,260.08

# Facilitate Development in East St. Cloud



BEP and SCR Facilitates meetings with East St. Cloud Business Owners



Leading conversations to impact the 2025 Comprehensive Plan to support the eastside of St. Cloud



De-Escalation Training for East St. Cloud Business Owners by St Cloud Police Department



Working with MN Extension Office and King Banaian on Economic Impact Study for East St. Cloud

# Identify and align business workforce needs with K-12 and Higher Ed educational offerings.

Workforce Committee  
Established in 2022

Participated in the  
EPIC Event in 2025

Secured Grants for  
Foley Public Schools

Working with K-12  
Schools to build  
relationships with  
Benton County  
Businesses



Identify  
community  
development  
opportunities to  
lead in  
Benton County.

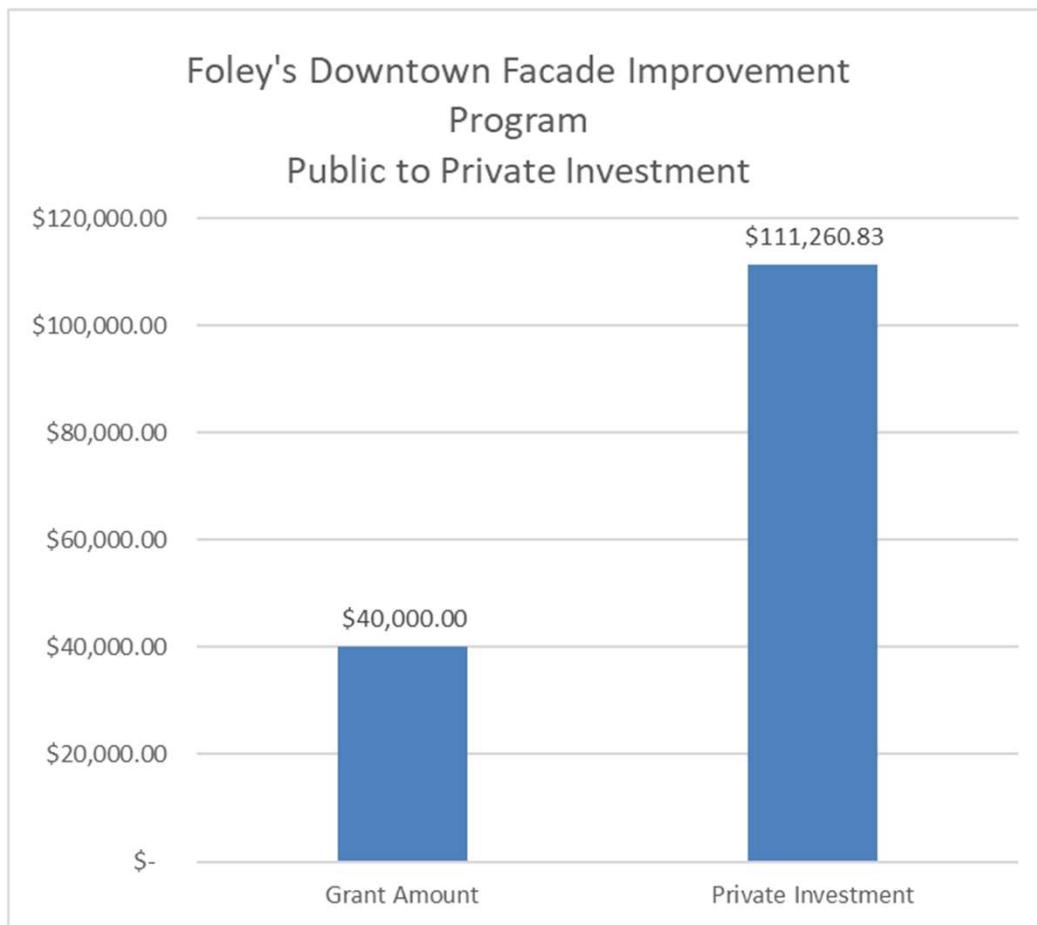


- **BEP to manage Benton County's Local Housing Aid**
  - Established a County-Wide Housing Trust Fund in early 2025
- **Exploring Public-Private Partnerships in Housing.**
  - City of Foley – Southside Development
- **Implement County Housing Study**
  - Workforce Housing Project Under Construction

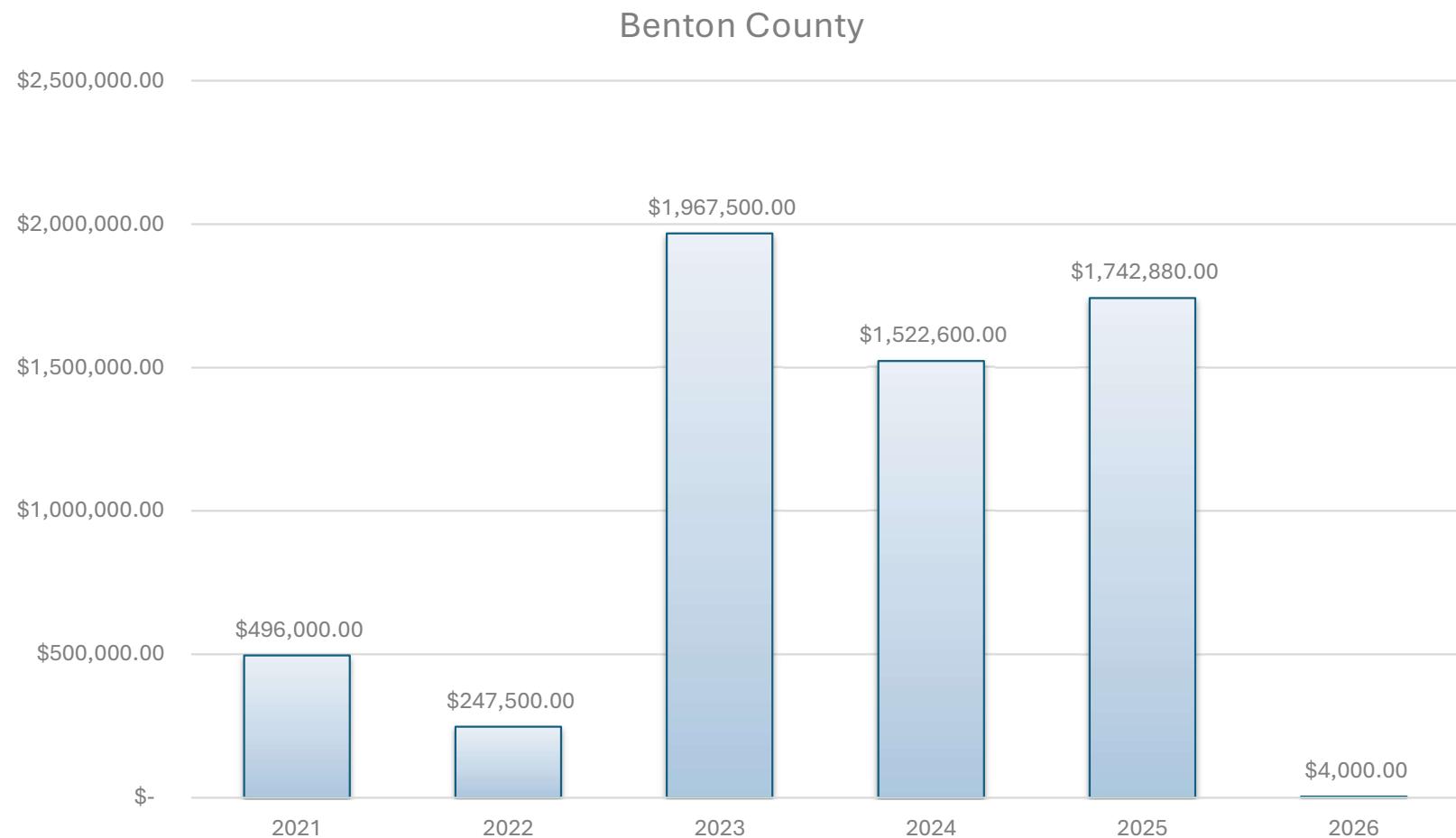
# Identify community development opportunities to lead in Benton County.

- County Broadband Initiative
  - Partnership with Benton Communications
  - Build out county with fiber to home and business.
  - Project Completed in Fall 2025
- Designating Region 7W as a Federal Economic District
  - Four county region – Benton, Stearns, Sherburne, Wright
  - Partnership with Initiative Foundation
  - Allows Benton County to be eligible for funding from Federal EDA.

# Identify community development opportunities to lead in Benton County.



# New Money Brought into the County 2020-2026



# What's New in 2026

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# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

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**Date of Event:** July 22, 2026

**Time:** 5:00 PM -8:00 PM

**Location:** Sauk Rapids  
Sports Arena East



# Taste of Benton County Event Highlights

- **First Annual Event Fundraiser**-Proceeds benefit Benton Economic Partnership, Inc., and a local nonprofit member
- **21+ Community Celebration** featuring local food, beverage, and hospitality businesses
- **Tastings from Across the Region**, including restaurants, bakeries, breweries, wineries, and beverage vendors
- **Local Business Showcase**: with specialty items highlighting the creativity and quality of Benton County businesses
- **Community Connection** – A relaxed, social atmosphere to connect with neighbors, business owners, and community leaders
- **Economic Development Focused** – Celebrating entrepreneurship and strengthening the local economy
- **Unforgettable Summer Evening** filled with flavor, friendship, and community pride

JOIN THE  
BEP EDGE  
CIRCLE

**Empowering Development,  
Growth & Excellence**



**BEP EDGE**  
**Circle**

Join the BEP EDGE Circle, a network  
of visionary organizations investing  
boldly in Benton County's future.

# JOIN THE EDGE



## Empowering Development, Growth & Excellence

Join the BEP **EDGE** Circle, a network of visionary organizations investing boldly in Benton County's future.

### Your Sponsorship Powers Progress

As a BEP **EDGE** Circle Sponsor, your organization will be recognized at these BEP Signature Events

#### **Taste of Benton County**

Premier Annual Fundraiser

#### **Annual Speed Networking Event**

High-impact professional connections

#### **Quarterly Membership Meetings**

Insight & engagement with community leaders

#### **Annual Meeting & Celebration**

Honoring achievements & shaping what's next

### **\$6,000 – Development Sponsor**

Building a stronger foundation for Benton County's future

#### Benefits include:

- Recognition at Taste of Benton County
- Logo on meeting programs & BEP website
- 2 complimentary event tickets
- Featured in press releases, social media, and e-news
- Opportunity to contribute a thought-leadership article
- Access to exclusive **EDGE** Circle receptions
- Tax-deductible contribution

### **\$8,000 – Growth Sponsor**

For leaders actively shaping our county's growth and prosperity  
Includes all Development Sponsor benefits, plus:

- Enhanced logo placement at all major events
- 4 complimentary event tickets
- Opportunity to introduce a speaker or panel
- Spotlight feature in BEP's annual report
- Invitation to leadership roundtables
- Priority communications & special recognition at Annual Meeting
- Tax-deductible contribution

### **\$10,000 – Excellence Sponsor**

Reserved for organizations driving bold transformation and innovation. Includes all Development + Growth benefits, plus:

- Premier logo placement & stage recognition
- Exclusive naming rights for one BEP event
- 8 VIP event tickets & reserved seating
- Private executive briefing with BEP leadership
- Opportunity for a featured address at a signature event
- Recognition in local media
- Designation as a Founding **EDGE** Circle Member
- Tax-deductible contribution

# Benton Economic Partnership, Inc.

## Success Stories

&



# ***Sunburst Memorials***

*A Scipi Company*

- 108 years old business in the same home for 108 years
- Identified space in the St. Cloud Regional Business Park
- Project kicked off in Spring 2024 and began engagement with BEP and STC Economic Development groups shortly after

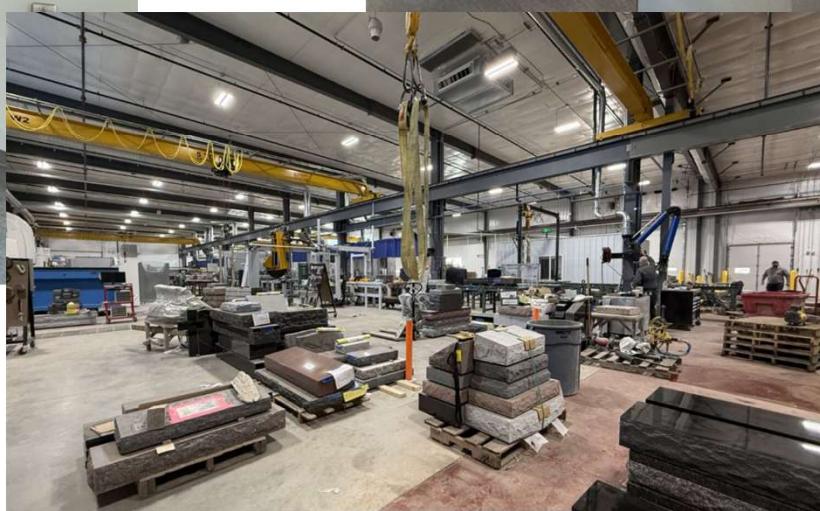
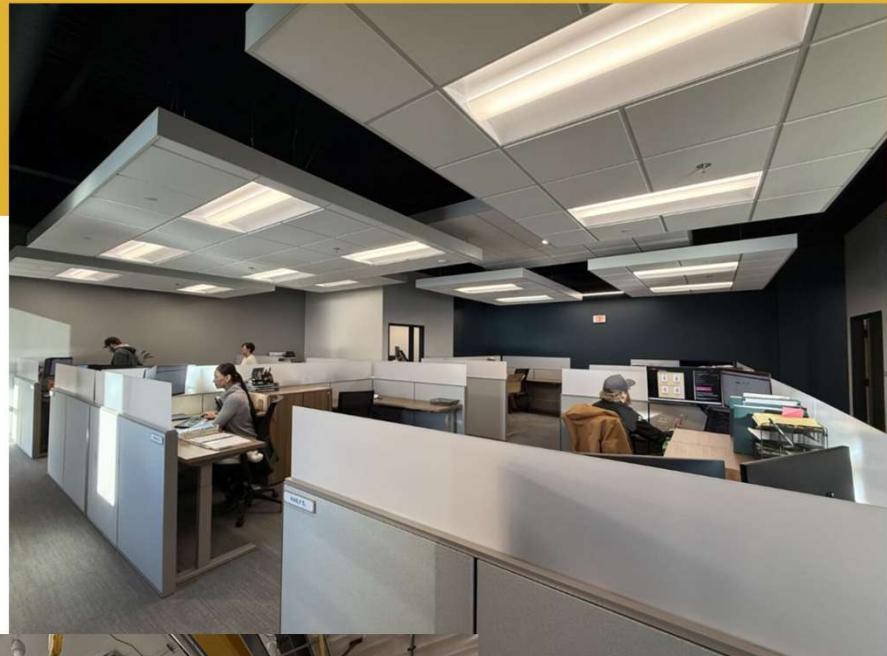
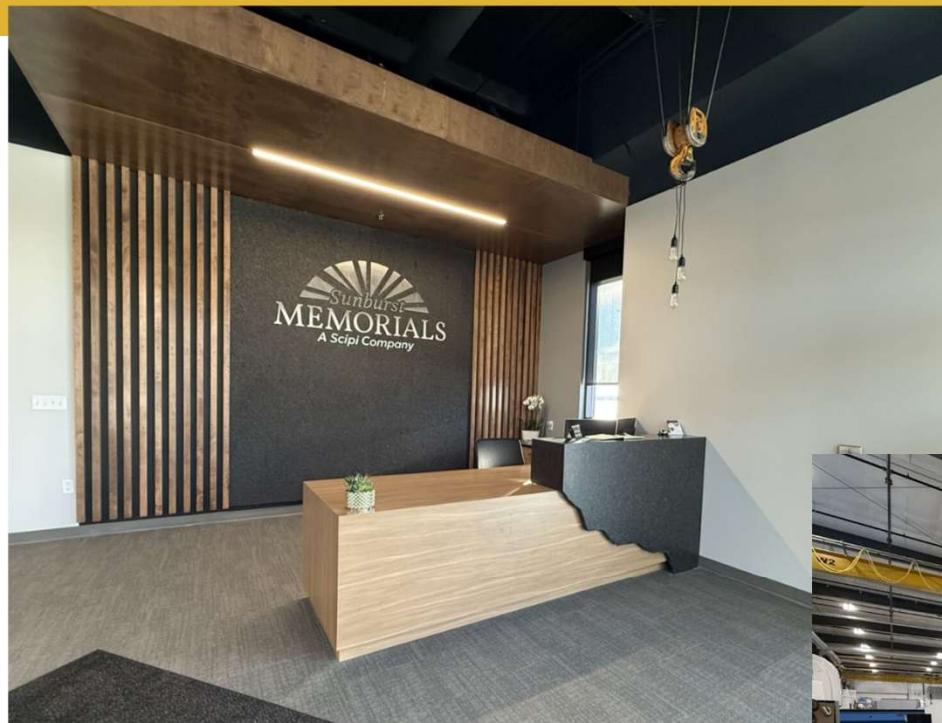


# *Partnership & Guidance*

- Application guidance and assistance filling out Job Creation Fund Grant (JCF) for the state.
  - Third Party to review the financials.
- Opened the door to various grant resources and dollars through DEED
  - Automated training program grant (ATIP)
  - Job Training Program (JTIP)
  - Incumbent Worker Training Program



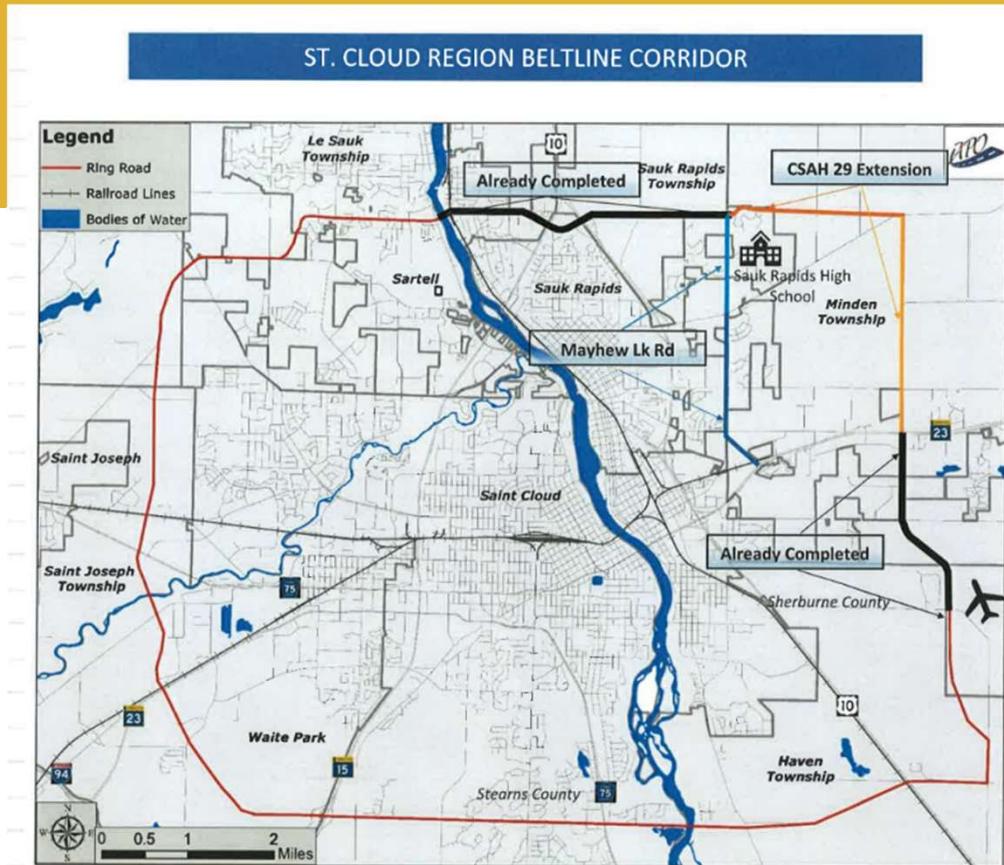
# Our New Home





# *Beltline Project*

- The project will provide an efficient and vital connection between TH 10 and TH 23.
- An important goal of the project is to connect TH 15/TH 10 in Sartell to the St. Cloud Airport complex and reconnect to TH 10 in Sherburne County.
- Letter of support to the county provided by Scipi
- \$1M Grant awarded



## *Benton County Beltline Projects*

CSAH 29 Ext. Orange – 2.5 miles, new road - \$5million

CSAH 29 Ext. Yellow – 2 miles reconstruct existing - \$3.75 million

### Mayhew Lk Rd – 1.1 miles widening w/Roundabout - \$5 million

Mayhew Lk Rd – 1.75 miles widening w/intersections - \$5million

Total for all projects = \$18.75 million



# thank you!

TO ALL OF OUR PARTNERS FOR MAKING THIS HAPPEN



FULL CIRCLE  
WATER

F L U I D



BREMER BANK







# About Northern Hollow Winery

- Located just outside the city limits in Foley, MN – visible from TH 23
- Opened August 2025
- 9,400 Square foot facility
- Max Capacity is 60 on the tasting room side
- Max Capacity is 200 on the event side
- 2400 Square feet of Event Space + 1200 Square feet of Tasting Room
- We Serve, Food, Wine, Select Beer
- Booking for Events in 2026 – Celebrations of Life, Graduation Parties, Weddings, Corporate Events, Bring us your ideas!
- Upcoming Events:
  - Stand Up Comedy Show – January 23, 2026
  - Valentine's Day Dinner – February 14, 2026
  - Live Music Fridays and Saturdays

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# How Benton Economic Partnership, Inc. Helped Move the Project Forward

- Metting to discuss the overall project and project scope, and discuss next steps in the development process.
- Provided list of local contractors and lenders.
- Approved a Revolving Loan from Benton County for Gap Financing
- Connected the project with the Initiative Foundation for additional Gap funding.
- Assisted with municipal approvals and attended County Board meetings
- Planned Groundbreaking Ceremony
- Guided the process and approvals for liquor licensing
- Supported driveway negotiations and site access
- Connected East Central Energy with Northern Hollow for the installation of parking lot lights.





**Northern Hollow Winery**  
Opened for business August 30, 2025



## ODAM MEDICAL

Specialist in Primary Care Medicine and Community Health

Providing patient-centered, compassionate healthcare focused on improving outcomes in underserved and rural communities.

Through integrated primary care, prevention, and innovative health solutions, they work to reduce health disparities and build healthier communities.

# About Odam Medical

Located at 700 Penn Street in Foley, MN 56329

- Locally owned & operated by Dr. Robert Odam

## **Family & Primary Care Clinic**

- Comprehensive, patient-centered healthcare

## **New Facility Highlights:**

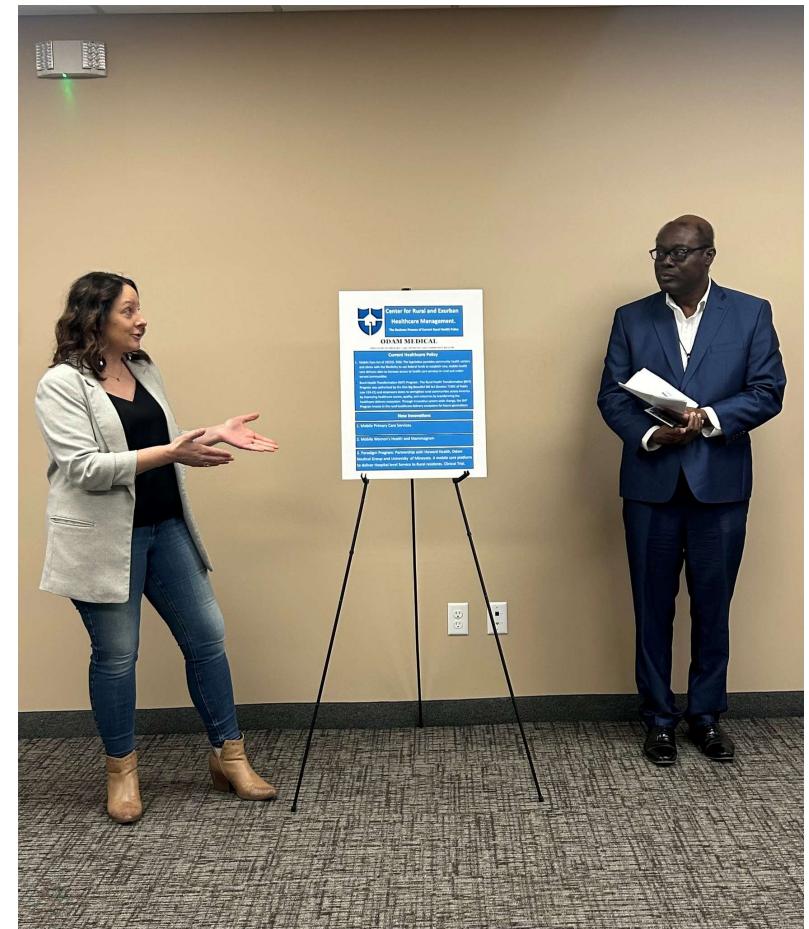
- 6,000 sq. ft. medical clinic
- 12 exam rooms
- X-ray room & on-site lab
- 3 large provider offices

## **Expanded Access to Care:**

- Mobile clinic providing rural healthcare services
- Mobile mammogram unit

## **Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

- December 19, 2026
- Doors Opened January 5, 2026



## Benton County Welcomes Odam Medical Center



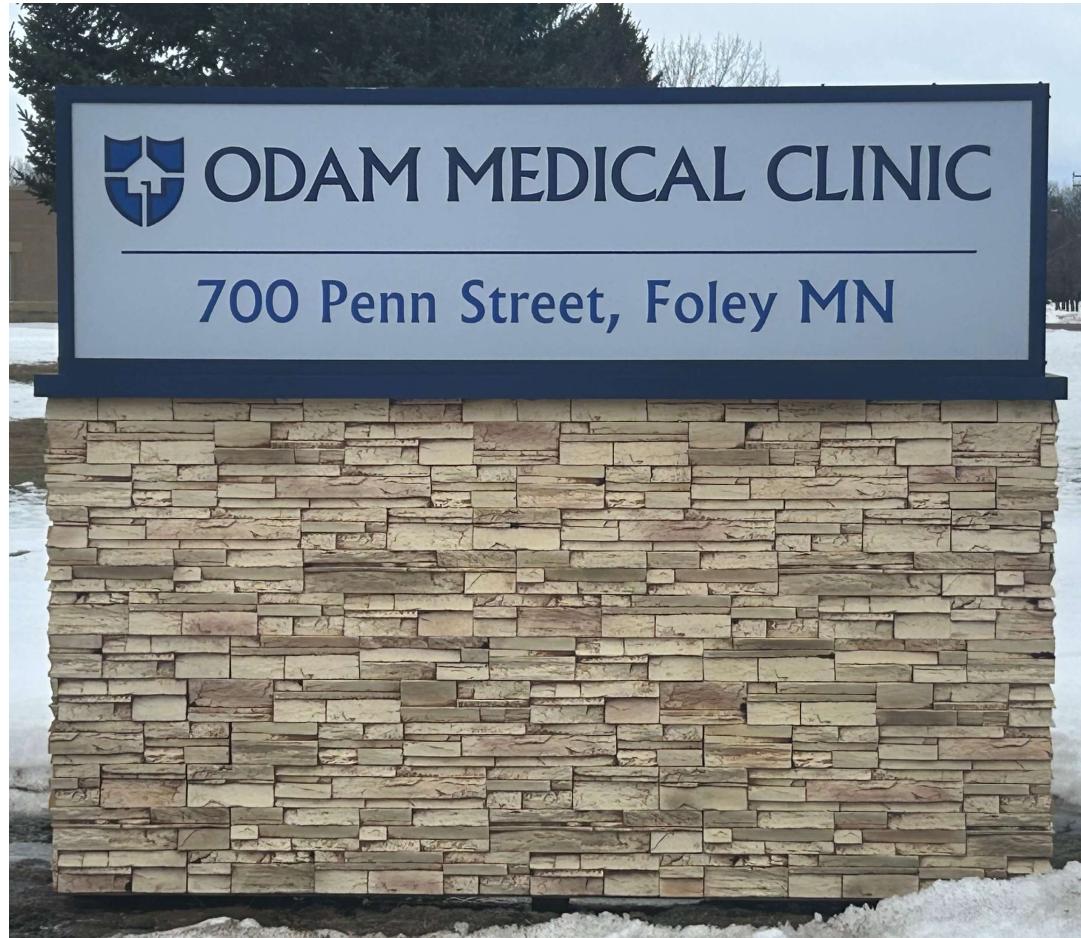
**ODAM MEDICAL**

Specialist in Primary Care Medicine and Community Health



# **How Benton Economic Partnership, Inc. Helped Move the Project Forward**

- Assisted with municipal approvals and attended County Board meetings
- Provided GAP Financing through the Revolving Loan Program
- Celebrating the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony with City, County, and Public Health Representatives.





# Benton Economic Partnership

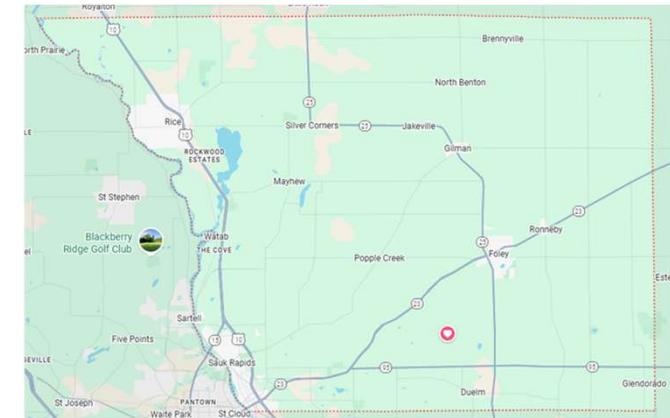
Annual Membership Meeting 2026

# Amax Manufacturing History

- 1950s - Foley Blacksmith (Grandfather)



- 1992 - Amax Plastics (Uncle)



- 2023 - Amax Manufacturing (Adam and Candice)

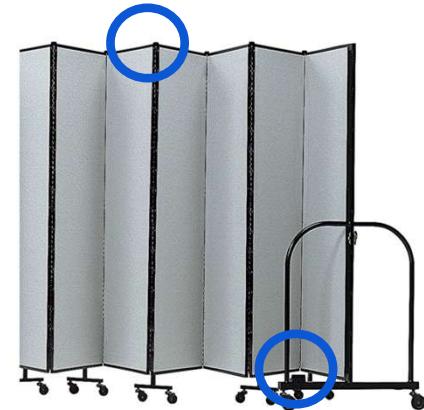


- 2025 - New Machine



# AMAX Manufacturing - Injection Molding

- Mobility Industry
  - Steering Wheel Grips
  - Chair Lift Shims
  - Electrical Covers
- Office Partitions
  - Hinges and Locks
- Flagpole Balls
- Medical Electrical Components
- Saunas



# Amax Manufacturing - 3D Printing

- Various Shop Fixturing
- Speargun Muzzle (Jamaica)
- St. Cloud Children's Museum Donor Wall
- Earrings/Keychains
- Custom Awards
- Custom Coasters
- Custom Items



# How Benton Economic Partnership, Inc. Helped Move the Project Forward

## 2025 - Automation Loan Program (MN DEED)

Worked with Tiffany Fettig

(Part of the State Small Business Credit Initiative - SSBCI)

Low-interest loan for 50% of the financing for the new machine

## 2024 - Career Solutions - Incumbent Worker Training Program

Worked with Angie Dahle

Reimbursement for 100% of tuition fees for the injection molding certification program

AMAX covered travel expenses and wages during training as matching funds



EXCELLENCE THROUGH  
AUTOMATION

## BEP and AIT

### A Collaborative Success Story in Economic Development



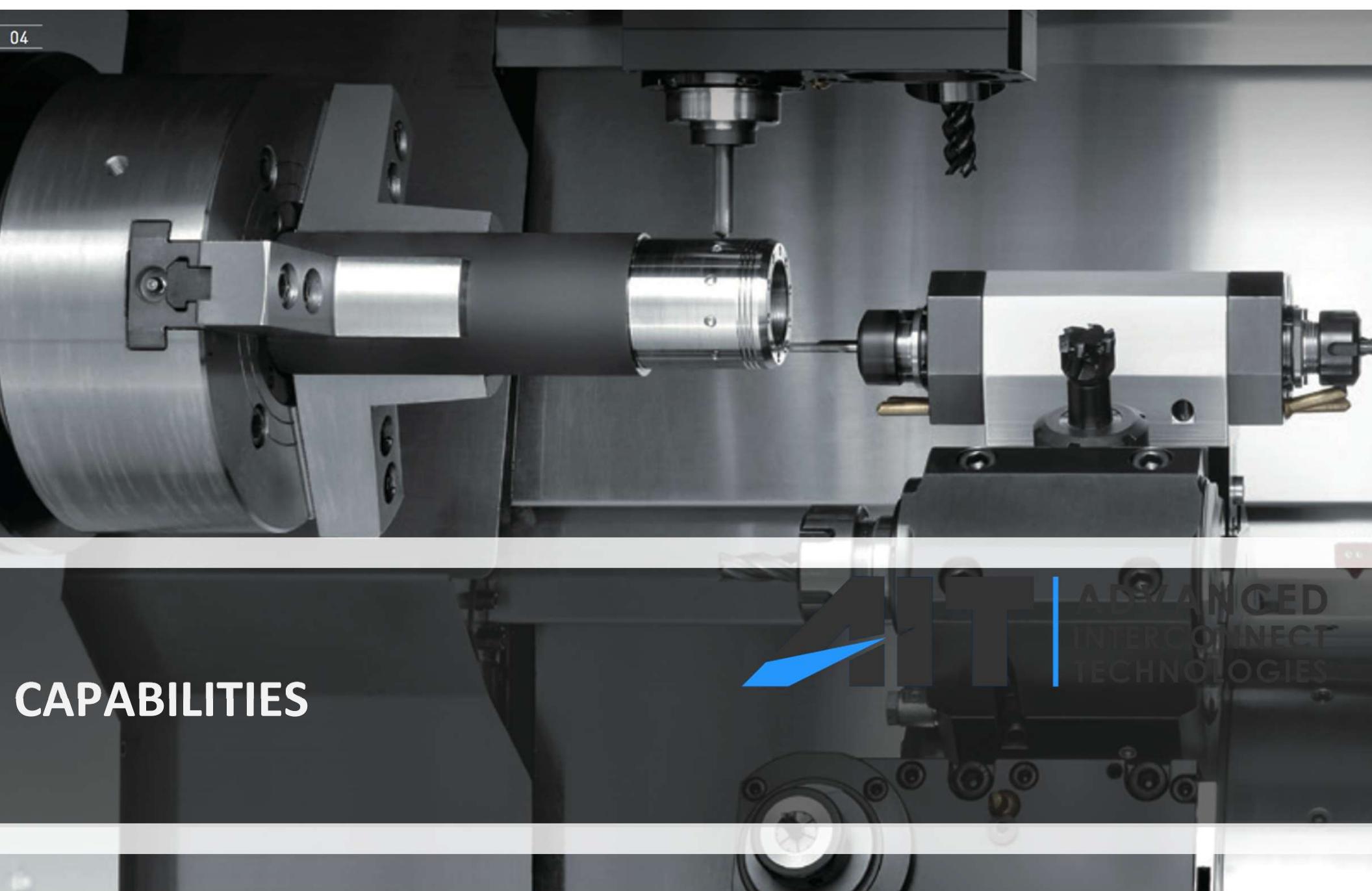
# COMPANY OVERVIEW

## ADVANCED INTERCONNECT TECHNOLOGIES, LLC. *SAINT CLOUD, MN*

Advanced Interconnect Technologies (AIT) provides manufacturing services and technical design assistance to the interconnect industry focusing on high reliability military, defense, commercial air, and space markets. AIT provides our customers highly automated contract manufacturing services which allows us to compete in the global marketplace while providing our customers quality products through robust processes.

AIT is built on our leadership's history in highly automated manufacturing processes and ability to service customers second to none with a proven track record of world class customer intimacy.





## CAPABILITIES

**AIT** | ADVANCED  
INTERCONNECT  
TECHNOLOGIES

# MANUFACTURING CAPABILITIES



## PRECISION MACHINING

AIT offers precision machining services utilizing advanced automation and process control

**Lights Out Manufacturing**  
Equipment utilizes robotic material handling, in process validation and process control, and on-board probing for in-line measurements

**Scalable Manufacturing**  
AIT is committed to investing in the latest equipment to scale capacity as demand increases

# MANUFACTURING CAPABILITIES



## TURNING / MILL-TURN

AIT offers turning and mill-turn services utilizing the latest Swiss-type and b-axis turning centers

**Unattended Operation**  
Equipment utilizes automatic bar feeding and latest monitoring software to assure high machine utilization.

**Unmatched Capability**  
With fully programmable B-axis in our machines, products are turned complete and deburred right out of the machine.

# MANUFACTURING CAPABILITIES



## ADVANCED AUTOMATION

AIT excels in precision high-speed automated assembly with core competencies in miniature assembly for the interconnect and medical device assembly

### Advanced Tooling

AIT excels in combining precision tooling capabilities with automation. Providing our customers world class solutions

### Vision and Controls

Leveraging our background in robotics and machine vision, AIT provides scalable solutions to handle large product families

# MANUFACTURING CAPABILITIES



## STAMPING

Development of contact and stamping process from initial prototype thru high-volume production

### Prototype Tooling

AIT designs, manufactures, and produces prototype thru mid-volume contacts in house utilizing stage tooling

### Production Stamping

Utilizing the latest stamping technologies, AIT has fully automated stamping capable of up to 2400 strokes/min.

# MANUFACTURING CAPABILITIES



## HIGH SPEED CABLE ASSEMBLY

AIT manufactures high-speed cable assemblies by employing state-of-the-art cable processing technology

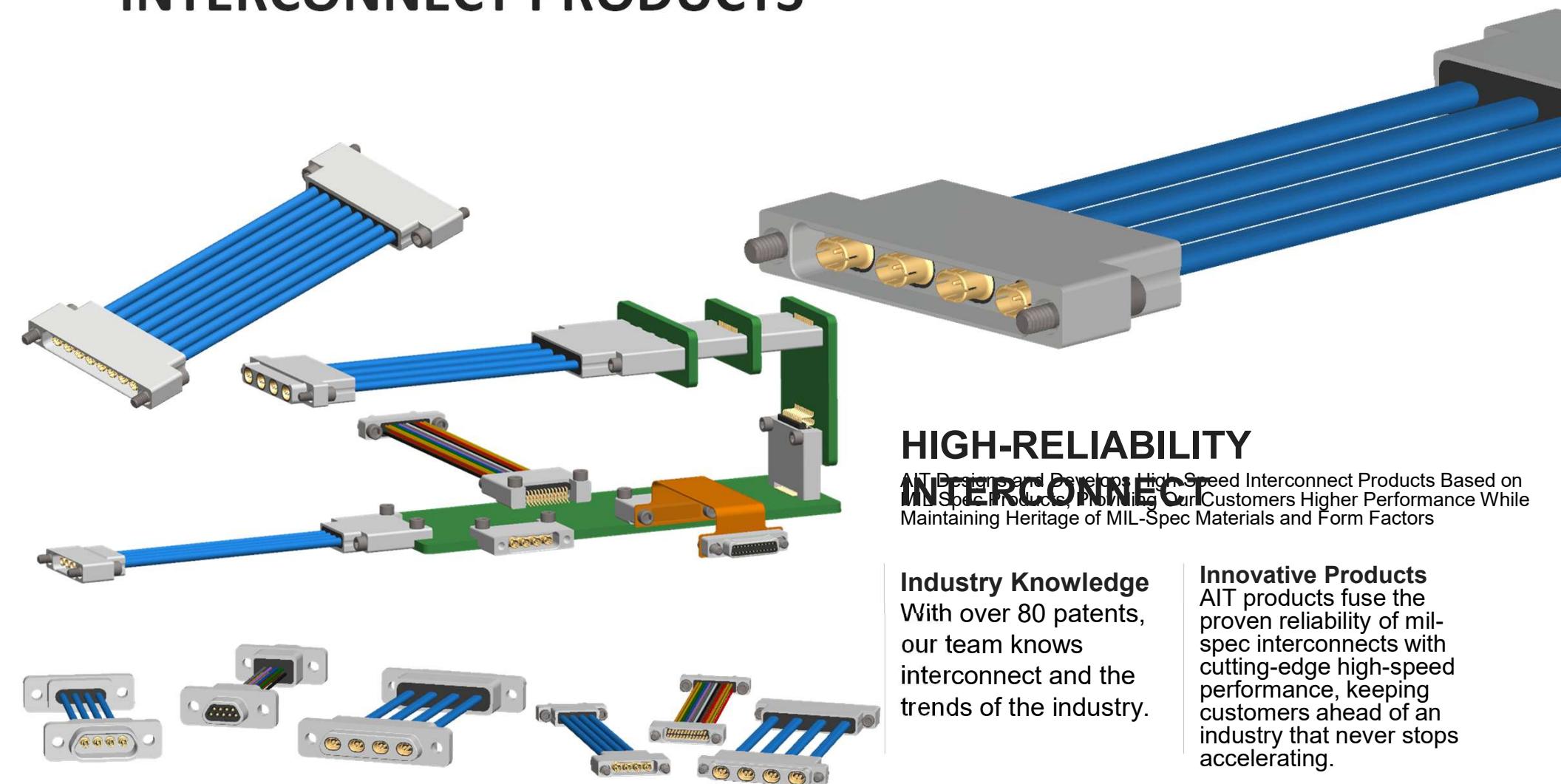
### Unmatched Repeatability

We achieve high-speed performance by implementing meticulously repeatable processes, allowing for consistent and efficient production of cable assemblies.

### Optimal Performance

Through our dedication to establishing reliable procedures, we ensure optimal performance and reliability in every assembly we manufacture.

# INTERCONNECT PRODUCTS

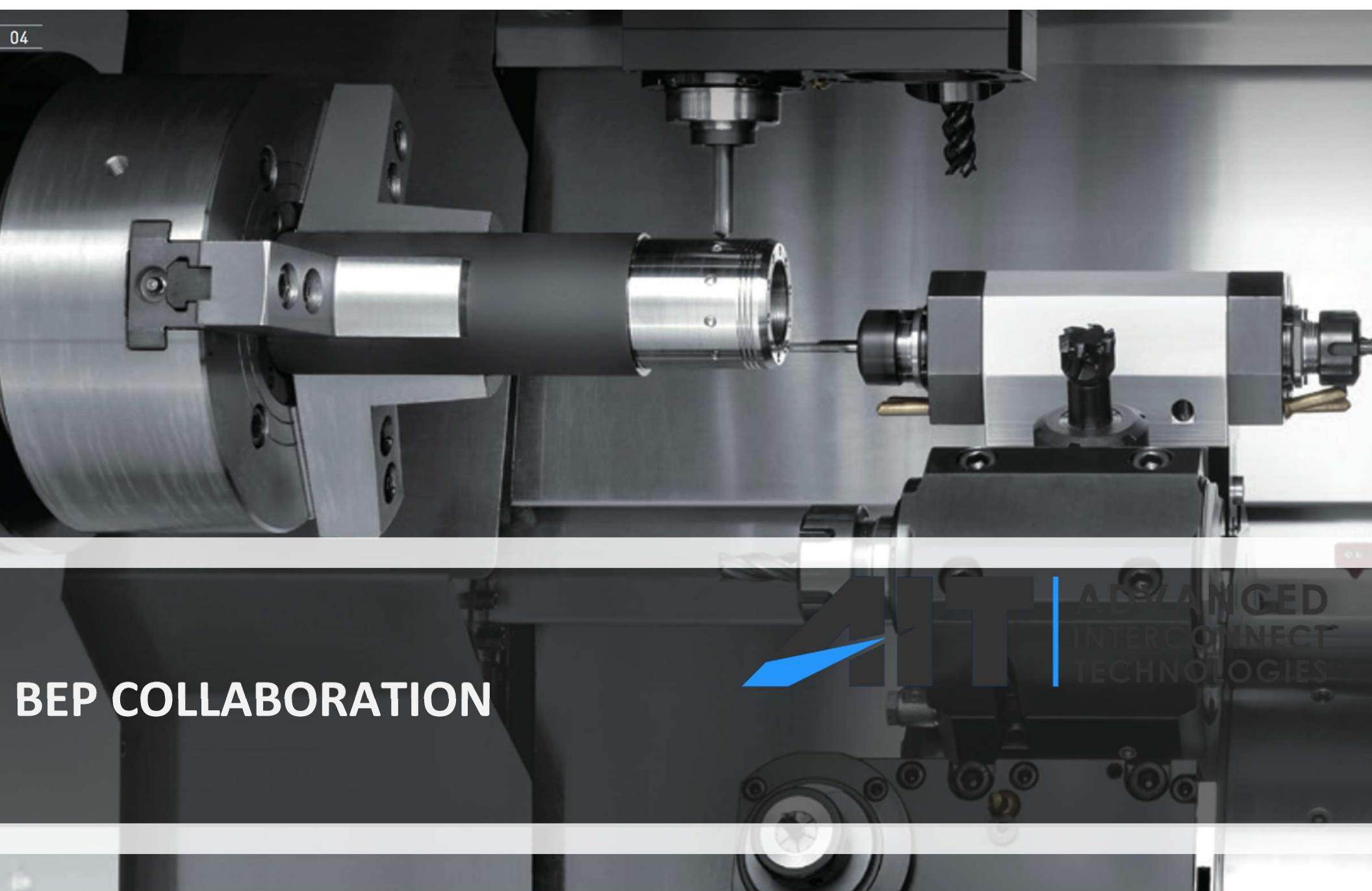


## HIGH-RELIABILITY INTERCONNECT

AIT Designs and Develops High-Speed Interconnect Products Based on MIL-SPEC Products, Providing Our Customers Higher Performance While Maintaining Heritage of MIL-SPEC Materials and Form Factors

**Industry Knowledge**  
With over 80 patents, our team knows interconnect and the trends of the industry.

**Innovative Products**  
AIT products fuse the proven reliability of mil-spec interconnects with cutting-edge high-speed performance, keeping customers ahead of an industry that never stops accelerating.



BEP COLLABORATION

# EXPANSION AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

AIT's expansion project was driven by increasing customer demand and the need for additional advanced manufacturing capacity.

## **Project objectives included:**

- Investment in state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment and processes
- Facility improvements to support growth and operational efficiency
- Creation and retention of high-quality manufacturing and engineering jobs

## **Economic impact highlights:**

- Long-term job creation in skilled manufacturing roles
- Strengthening the regional advanced manufacturing capabilities
- Adding high-reliability interconnect manufacturing to the region
- Public-private partnership was essential to ensuring the project could move forward at the required scale and timeline.



# BEP'S ROLE

The **Benton Economic Partnership (BEP)** played a critical role throughout the funding process.

## **BEP's support included:**

- Identifying MIF and JCF funding opportunities aligned with AIT's project
- Making key connections between AIT, DEED, and the City of St. Cloud
- Providing detailed financial review and analysis for DEED
- Guiding AIT through application requirements, documentation, and timelines



**BEP's hands-on involvement significantly strengthened the application and accelerated the overall process.**

# PARTNERSHIP OUTCOMES

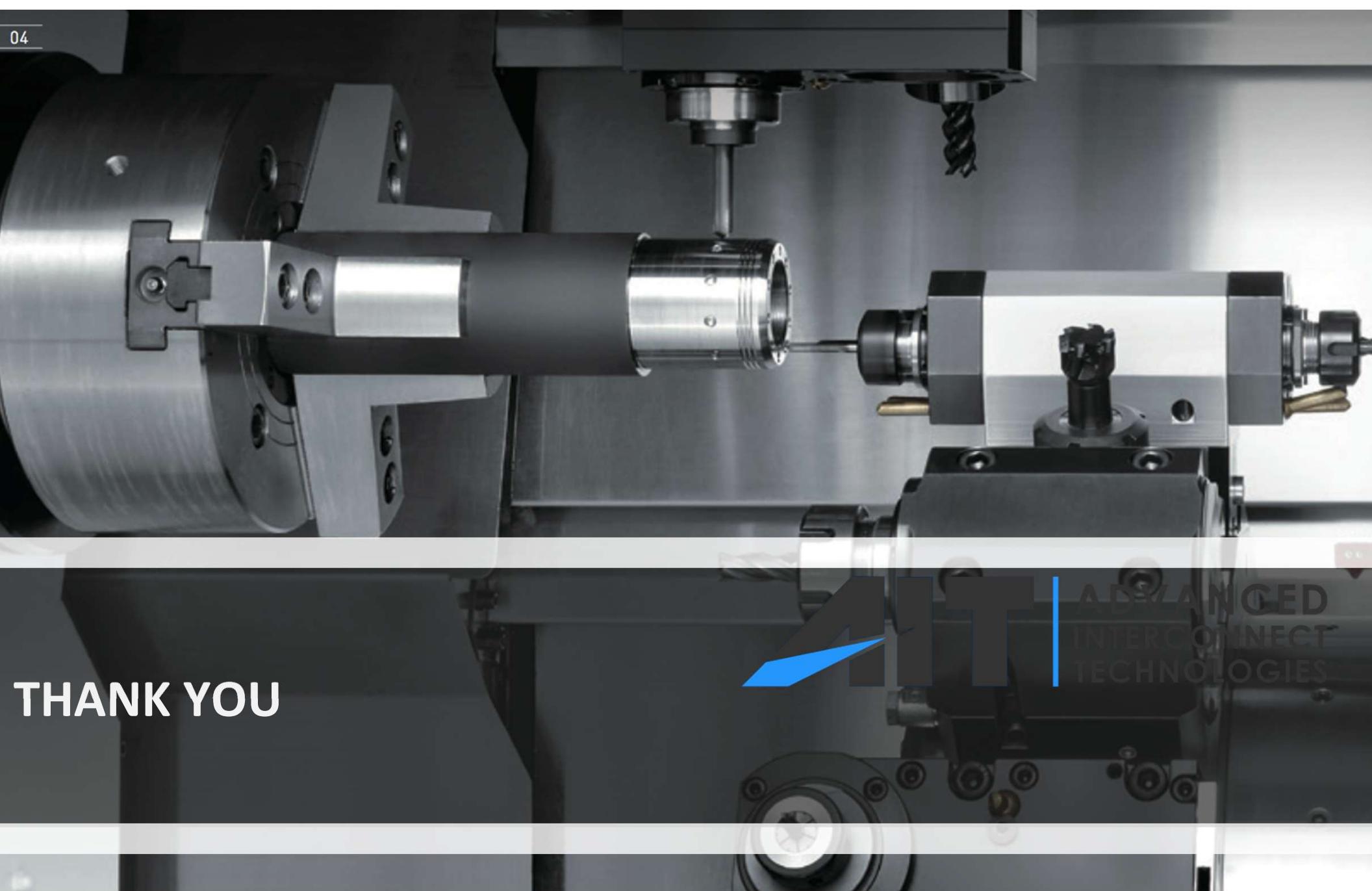
The successful award of MIF and JCF funding demonstrates the value of strong regional collaboration.

## Key Outcomes:

- Funding secured to support AIT's manufacturing expansion
- Jobs created and retained in Benton County and the St. Cloud region
- Reinforcement of Minnesota's commitment to advanced manufacturing



**AIT views BEP not just as a funding partner, but as a long-term strategic ally in growth and development.**



THANK YOU

# Benton Economic Partnership Inc.

## Founding Members



*Watab Township*  
Benton County, Minnesota



BENTON/SHERBURNE COUNTY  
CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

*Design* ~~~~~



# QUESTIONS

Thank you for attending  
our Annual Meeting



Amanda Othoudt, EDFP  
Executive Director  
Office: 320.968.6197

## **Mark Your Calendar**

**Our Quarterly Meeting  
Will be Held  
April 23, 2026,  
7:30 AM-9:00 AM  
Location: TBD**



Pamela Vizenor  
Executive Assistant  
Office: 320-818-1111