

The Dakota Project

A Conversation about Possibilities & Prospects

The purpose of the Dakota Project is to reconsider the possibilities and prospects of life on the northern plains in the light of the remarkable changes and developments occurring in the 21st Century. Building upon traditional strengths, and capitalizing on material advantages, North Dakota has the potential to offer the good life to its citizens and a positive example to the nation. The Dakota Project initiates conversation about the transformative circumstances of the northern plains in the 21st Century and explores how we might respond to them. This conversation is catalyzed by keynote speakers addressing key elements of the current transformation. The central organizing entity for the Dakota Project, working with many partners, is the Northern Plains Ethics Institute, North Dakota State University.

Material Advantages of North Dakota Today

1. The prospect of long-term profitability in agriculture
2. The dynamic growth of the energy industry
3. A burgeoning knowledge industry in both public and private sectors
4. For the first time since the 1880s, a positive external brand for North Dakota

These material advantages transform North Dakota, which endured economic dependency and demographic decline for most of the 20th Century, into a place of terrific potential.

| Structuring a Conversation | |
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| Prologue | Frame the issue (focus groups, online discussions, consultations) and publicize it (feature stories, interviews, online activity) |
| | Full-court press of publicity statewide promoting keynote |
| Keynote | Keynoter addresses the key element of the issue: what is different about our possibilities & prospects today |
| | Dissemination via Prairie Public, interviews, news releases, webcasts, online discussions |
| Response | Respondents treat the implications of changing circumstances for North Dakota |
| | Dissemination via Prairie Public, interviews, news releases, webcasts, online discussions |

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| Consolidation | Online archiving for ready reference |
| | Book publication comprising keynotes, responses, features, and discussion |

Beginning the Conversation

First topic of conversation: Agriculture. Two fundamental questions.

1. Is the economic condition of agriculture on the northern plains, due to global developments, fundamentally different than it was a generation ago?
2. What are the implications of this for North Dakota? What are the opportunities? What are the dangers?

The first question to be addressed by a keynoter and by respondents, who apply the macro trends to the North Dakota situation.

The second question to be addressed by scholars, farmers, entrepreneurs, and citizens who are invested in the future of North Dakota.

Timeframe for beginning the conversation: aim for a keynote event around 1 February 2012?

Audience & Aims

1. Engagement of civic leaders toward an expectation of vision
2. Engagement of general public toward a culture of possibilities
3. The power of ideas: generation, dissemination, & consolidation

Operational Questions

- Who is a likely keynoter on agriculture?
- Who are likely respondents?
- Where should a program be held?
- How might it be funded?
- Who will do the necessary tasks outlined above?