



ACTION PLAN 2026



Executive Summary

Brule County is the heart of South Dakota. Residents enjoy superior access to the Missouri River for fishing and can reach both of the state's largest cities in just a few hours. Within the county itself, residents can get nearly everything they need to live a great life in a rural community.

PorchLight was contracted to create a five-year strategic plan for Chamberlain-Oacoma in the spring of 2026. Through that process, it was identified that Brule County could benefit from an action plan that builds upon the strategic plan, supporting overall growth for the county. The themes identified in the strategic plan (Sustainable Implementation, Essential Services, Economic Development, Experience and Amenities, and Infrastructure) were extended throughout the county action plan to support Brule County holistically.

In the end, six goals were identified to be achieved over the next five years in Brule County and are explained in detail throughout this report.

Sustainable Implementation

Goal 1: Improved communication and collaboration between the communities and governments of Brule County.

Goal 2: Each community maintains its independence and identity.

Essential Services

Goal 1: Housing

Goal 2: Attract and serve young families

Economic Development

Goal 1: Foster Entrepreneurship

Experience and Amenities

Goal 1: Arts and Culture

The steering committee that worked to develop this plan and will lead implementation includes representatives from: the Lake Francis Case Development Corporation, the City of Chamberlain, the City of Kimball, the City of Pukwana, Brule County Commission, and Central Electric Cooperative.

Read on for more details on the specifics of the action plan and the process the county conducted to get to this final document.

Goals

The steering committee will review the action plan regularly to ensure all goals and outcomes are achieved. PorchLight will continue to be available throughout plan implementation for technical assistance on the spreadsheet. This plan is broken up into three core components:

Goals -> Strategies -> Outcomes

GOALS are the main things this plan seeks to achieve.

STRATEGIES are the ways Brule County will work to achieve its goals.

OUTCOMES are the specific points of measurement to determine if the strategies are successfully being executed to achieve the goals of the plan. Each outcome has two pieces of information associated with it: a lead implementer and a deadline.

The **LEAD IMPLEMENTER** is the organization responsible for ensuring that outcome is achieved on time. The lead implementer is not the only organization that will touch any particular outcome; they may delegate certain tasks to others or work collaboratively with others to achieve that outcome, but they are the one accountable for ensuring that outcome is achieved on time and for managing it to success.

The **DEADLINE** is when a particular outcome is expected to be achieved.

Goal 1: Improve communication and collaboration between the communities and governments of Brule County

Strategy 1: Rebrand regional efforts to utilize a unified identity inclusive of all communities.

Something that consistently came up in discussions with people throughout the county was unifying the county behind a common name. Although the entities that already exist in the county are doing great work, there are some predetermined thoughts about what the individual entities do and who they serve. A rebrand would create an opportunity for all communities in Brule County to support one another under a new umbrella and work together towards the future.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Leaders in Chamberlain, Oacoma, Kimball, Pukwana, and rural Brule County have agreed upon a unifying term for the Brule County and Lyman County area.	LCDC	Year 1
The new regional branding has been adopted by organizations that serve the region.	LCDC	Year 3

Strategy 2: Chamberlain-Oacoma, Brule County, Kimball, and Pukwana are included in each other's strategic planning meetings.

There is a strong desire from every community in the county for clear communication. Each community must make the recurring quarterly meeting a priority with the intention to continue the collaboration that began in the discussions with this action plan.

Outcome	Deadline	Lead Implementer	Recurring
Members of the steering committee for the Chamberlain-Oacoma Strategic Plan and the Brule County action plan participate in each other's quarterly plan reviews.	Year 1	LF CDC	Yes
Strategic plan review meetings rotate between Chamberlain, Oacoma, Kimball, and Pukwana.	Year 1	LF CDC	Yes

Goal 2: Each community maintains its independence and identity

Strategy 1: Support Kimball's school district.

The Kimball School District is mentioned in the action plan exclusively because this entire plan is built upon the Chamberlain - Oacoma strategic plan, where the Chamberlain School District is included in future planning goals.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Include leadership from the Kimball School District in regional planning and decision-making efforts.	City of Kimball	Year 1

Strategy 2: Explore opportunities for healthcare access in Kimball.

Respondents had mentioned recent closures or limited hours of healthcare facilities in Kimball as a pain point. There are opportunities to enhance the healthcare options in Kimball.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Community leaders have analyzed the healthcare landscape in Kimball, including mapping current healthcare access and facility closures, and identified opportunities to maintain or expand healthcare access in Kimball.	City of Kimball	Year 2

Strategy 3: Actively pursue opportunities related to economic development and housing for Pukwana.

Pukwana is full of opportunities for growth. Although Pukwana is the smallest community in the county, there is the most room for growth.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
LFCDC and Pukwana have developed a joint document outlining residential and commercial land availability in Pukwana.	City of Pukwana	Year 1
Pukwana has added new housing units compared to the start of the plan.	City of Pukwana	Year 5
At least one new business has opened in Pukwana.	City of Pukwana	Year 5

Goal 3: Housing

Strategy 1: Expand senior housing opportunities in Brule County.

Keeping seniors living in the community where they worked and raised their families is crucial to each community. Focusing on senior living solutions will also free up much-needed workforce housing in the community at the same time.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Kimball and Pukwana are partners with Chamberlain-Oacoma in exploring options for senior housing opportunities in the area.	LFCDC	Year 1
Brule County has more places for seniors to live than at the start of the plan.	LFCDC	Year 5

Strategy 2: Recruit skilled local trades workers to support local building of housing.

There is a strong need for tradespeople living and working in Brule County. Attracting tradespeople to Brule County will support the county as a whole.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Community leaders have met with employers in the trades about opportunities to foster the next generation of tradespeople, including through the Build Dakota scholarship program.	LFCDC	Year 3
At least three new people under 30 have started in the trades in Brule County.	LFCDC	Year 5

Strategy 3: Explore site options for housing across the county.

There are spaces throughout the county to build new housing options. Having a comprehensive map of available land allows for strategic investment throughout the county.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Community leaders have developed a comprehensive map of available land in Chamberlain, Pukwana, Kimball, and rural Brule County for new housing.	LFCDC	Year 3

Goal 4: Arts and Culture

The arts were brought up in each community as a community engagement opportunity and to bring beauty to each community. Goal four will create a new entity focused solely on this objective.

Strategy 1: Establish a regional arts council for the Brule County area.

Recurring	Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
	A regional arts council has been created and housed within an existing organization like the LFCDC, with representation from all local communities, to foster and support artistic creation and display throughout the region.	Olivia Downs & Sharman Swanson	Year 1
Yes	The regional arts council meets regularly to work on projects that engage the community in art, to increase the public display of art, and to engage with community leaders around art's benefit to the region.	Arts Council	Year 2
	The regional arts council has evaluated and pursued grant funding to support art in the region.	Arts Council	Year 5

Strategy 2: Increase the number of public art pieces in Brule County.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
The regional arts council facilitates or supports programming for the public or community groups to create art.	Arts Council	Year 3
The regional arts council has increased the number of art pieces accessible to the public, including tourists, throughout the region.	Arts Council	Year 5

Goal 5: Attract and serve young families

Attracting young families to Brule County is crucial to the future. Two major hurdles for young families looking to settle in a new town are childcare and activities to do as a family. Goal five seeks to accomplish both.

Strategy 1: Retain and expand childcare access in Brule County.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
A countywide facilities and land audit has been conducted to assess the viability of potential locations to host a childcare facility, including churches, publicly-held facilities, and private vacant or underutilized buildings.	LCFDC	Year 1
A full list of childcare providers in the community has been put together, including information about the number of slots, availability, and succession planning and business sustainability.	LCFDC	Year 1
Brule County has more childcare slots available compared to the beginning of the action plan.	LCFDC	Year 5

Strategy 2: Maintain and invest in parks and recreation opportunities in Brule County.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Brule County communities continue to prioritize upkeep for existing parks and recreation infrastructure.	City of Pukwana & City of Kimball	Year 1
Brule County has expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation outside Chamberlain.	LCFDC	Year 5

Goal 6: Foster Entrepreneurship

Strategy 1: Expand youth entrepreneurship programming in Brule County.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Brule County youth have an opportunity to participate in an entrepreneurship competition or workshop.	LCFDC	Year 3
Brule County schools have expanded entrepreneurship programming.	LCFDC	Year 5

Strategy 2: Pursue succession planning for existing businesses in Brule County.

Outcome	Lead Implementer	Deadline
A workshop on succession planning has been held for Brule County businesses.	LCFDC	Year 2
Community leaders have identified key businesses that could experience transition over the next ten years and discussed succession planning with business owners.	LCFDC	Year 3

Strategy 3: Explore innovative support structures for Brule County entrepreneurs.

Outcomes	Lead Implementer	Deadline
Community leaders have explored opportunities for an innovative incubator program for Brule County entrepreneurs, including in the trades.	LCFDC	Year 3
If determined feasible, Brule County has inexpensive physical space available for entrepreneurs.	LCFDC	Year 5

Timeline

Items marked as recurring should be reviewed at each meeting after their initial due date to ensure they remain on track.

Recurring	Deadline	Lead Implementer	Outcome
	Year 1	LF CDC	Leaders in Chamberlain, Oacoma, Kimball, Pukwana, and rural Brule County have agreed upon a unifying term for the Brule County and Lyman County area.
Yes	Year 1	LF CDC	Members of the steering committee for the Chamberlain-Oacoma Strategic Plan and the Brule County action plan participate in each other's quarterly plan reviews.
Yes	Year 1	LF CDC	Strategic plan review meetings rotate between Chamberlain, Oacoma, Kimball, and Pukwana.
	Year 1	LF CDC	Brule County leaders discuss and coordinate on volunteer management, finding new ways to activate community members while making sure not to ask the same people for everything.
	Year 1	City of Kimball	Include leadership from the Kimball School District in regional planning and decision-making efforts.
	Year 1	City of Pukwana	LF CDC and Pukwana have developed a joint document outlining residential and commercial land availability in Pukwana.
	Year 1	LF CDC	Kimball and Pukwana are partners with Chamberlain-Oacoma in exploring options for senior housing opportunities in the area.

	Year 1	Olivia Downs & Sharman Swanson	A regional arts council has been created and housed within an existing organization like the LFCDC, with representation from all local communities, to foster and support artistic creation and display throughout the region.
	Year 1	LFCDC	A countywide facilities and land audit has been conducted to assess the viability of potential locations to host a childcare facility, including churches, publicly-held facilities, and private vacant or underutilized buildings.
	Year 1	LFCDC	A full list of childcare providers in the community has been put together, including information about the number of slots, availability, and succession planning and business sustainability.
	Year 1	City of Pukwana & City of Kimball	Brule County communities continue to prioritize upkeep for existing parks and recreation infrastructure.
	Year 2	LFCDC	Community leaders have developed a brief volunteer and leader support and retention plan, based on interviews with volunteers, to identify overtaxed volunteers, needs for additional volunteers, and opportunities to share the load.
	Year 2	City of Kimball	Community leaders have analyzed the healthcare landscape in Kimball, including mapping current healthcare access and facility closures, and identified opportunities to maintain or expand healthcare access in Kimball.
Yes	Year 2	Arts Council	The regional arts council meets regularly to work on projects that engage the community in art, to increase the public display of art, and to engage

			with community leaders around art's benefit to the region.
	Year 2	LF CDC	A workshop on succession planning has been held for Brule County businesses.
	Year 3	LF CDC	The new regional branding has been adopted by organizations that serve the region.
Yes	Year 3	LF CDC	On an annual basis, new volunteers or community leaders are being recruited and incorporated into community efforts.
	Year 3	LF CDC	Community leaders have met with employers in the trades about opportunities to foster the next generation of tradespeople, including through the Build Dakota scholarship program.
	Year 3	LF CDC	Community leaders have developed a comprehensive map of available land in Chamberlain, Pukwana, Kimball, and rural Brule County for new housing.
	Year 3	Arts Council	The regional arts council facilitates or supports programming for the public or community groups to create art.
	Year 3	LF CDC	Brule County youth have an opportunity to participate in an entrepreneurship competition or workshop.
	Year 3	LF CDC	Community leaders have identified key businesses that could experience transition over the next ten years and discussed succession planning with business owners.
	Year 3	LF CDC	Community leaders have explored opportunities for an innovative incubator program for Brule County entrepreneurs, including in the trades.
	Year 5	LF CDC	Volunteers and community leaders report they have the tools and support system to be involved without feeling overwhelmed.

	Year 5	City of Pukwana	Pukwana has added new housing units compared to the start of the plan.
	Year 5	City of Pukwana	At least one new business has opened in Pukwana.
	Year 5	LFCD	Brule County has more places for seniors to live than at the start of the plan.
	Year 5	LFCD	At least three new people under 30 have started in the trades in Brule County.
	Year 5	Arts Council	The regional arts council has evaluated and pursued grant funding to support art in the region.
	Year 5	Arts Council	The regional arts council has increased the number of art pieces accessible to the public, including tourists, throughout the region.
	Year 5	LFCD	Brule County has more childcare slots available compared to the beginning of the action plan.
	Year 5	LFCD	Brule County has expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation outside Chamberlain.
	Year 5	LFCD	Brule County schools have expanded entrepreneurship programming.
	Year 5	LFCD	If determined feasible, Brule County has inexpensive physical space available for entrepreneurs.

Process Overview

Brule County contracted PorchLight to develop a five-year action plan as an extension of the Chamberlain-Oacoma strategic plan. The process had multiple layers of contact throughout Brule County over multiple months to ensure the five-year action plan reflected the needs and desires of the county as a whole.

Alignment Meeting June 2026

The Brule County steering committee held its first meeting in June to align on the timeline and objective of the project. There was representation from each community, county boards, and the county commission to ensure a balanced outlook for Brule County. The meeting covered the project timeline as well as the individual elements that would take place to create the action plan.

Input Interviews July 2026

PorchLight conducted a day of input interviews in July in Chamberlain, Kimball, and Pukwana. The topics covered in each interview aligned with the Chamberlain-Oacoma strategic plan themes of Essential Services, Economic Development, Experience and Amenities, and Infrastructure.

Community Survey July 2026

When the input interviews were complete, a community survey was distributed to the county in partnership with the Lake Francis Case Development Corporation and the steering committee.

Facilitated Session July 2026

PorchLight and the steering committee held an in-person facilitated session in Kimball to discuss the findings from the input interviews as well as the county survey to determine the goals for the action plan.

Outline, Themes, Goals, Strategies, and Outcomes for action plan August 2026

Following the steering committee facilitated session, PorchLight developed a detailed outline to cover the goals, strategies, and outcomes of the action plan. PorchLight then

reviewed the full outline with the steering committee via a virtual meeting to make line-by-line edits and achieve full alignment.

Writing final action plan August - September 2026

When the outline was approved by the steering committee, PorchLight began writing the final action plan for Brule County using the information from the input interviews, county survey feedback, as well as the information gathered from the facilitated session.

Present action plan to Steering Committee and Community September 2026

PorchLight held two presentations to the steering committee and a public presentation. The steering committee presentation was held virtually as a first glance at the final action plan and to answer any questions the committee may have. The public presentation focused on how we created the action plan, how it ties into the Chamberlain-Oacoma strategic plan, and how both benefit the county as a whole. A final presentation to the county commission was scheduled for their next meeting upon completion of the action plan.

Bi-Weekly Updates

PorchLight stayed in contact with the steering committee throughout the entire process by sending bi-weekly updates to the steering committee in an effort of transparency. These emails showed where PorchLight was in the process of completing the action plan.

About Us

PorchLight provides workforce development and economic development services to rural communities. Through our rural workforce development initiatives, we help businesses in rural areas, or with a rural footprint, recruit middle- and high-skilled workers. To date, PorchLight has placed over \$3 million in salaries within these communities. Our economic development work further supports growth by providing housing studies, strategic planning, and bespoke research projects. Additionally, the PorchLight Certification helps communities of 5,000 residents or fewer demonstrate that they are open for business and ready to welcome families home.

Jessica Meyers - CEO



Originally from Winner, SD (pop. 2,852), Jessica Meyers was raised in Winner and Vermillion, SD, and earned her bachelor's degree at South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD. Jessica and her husband followed the flight pattern of many young adults and left the small towns of SD for bigger cities. After 10 years of living in some of the largest cities in America, she now lives in Sioux Falls, SD, with her family. In her professional career, Jessica has worked in several industries, including publishing, sales, and healthcare recruiting, where she has run multi-million dollar organizations and won multiple national awards across industries. Pairing over 20 years of sales and recruiting experience, she decided to go out on her own.

Jessica is co-founder and CEO of PorchLight, a talent recruitment firm that partners with rural communities to prepare for the 21st-century workforce and connect rural workers to employment opportunities. Jessica created the first-of-its-kind PorchLight Certification and created the platform where rural economic development and job opportunities connect. In 2025, Jessica was awarded the Innovation at the Leading Edge award by the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses summit in Washington, DC, for her efforts connecting her workforce development innovations to rural economic development.

Jessica has decades of experience in the recruiting space across multiple industries. With her team, PorchLight has expanded its services to include housing studies, strategic planning, and other rural research initiatives.

Berk Ehrmantraut - Director of Policy and Community



Originally from Beresford, SD (pop. 2,180), Berk is the Director of Policy and Community at PorchLight and the lead author on this report. He leads PorchLight's work with communities to support their workforce needs, including housing, childcare, community development, and employee attraction. After growing up in Jamestown, ND, and Aberdeen and Beresford, SD, Berk attended American University in Washington, D.C., where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in interdisciplinary studies in Communication, Legal Institutions, Economics, and Government. He is a Certified Collaborative Discussion Coach through the Collaborative Discussion Project. After working on South Dakota political campaigns and working as a staffer for the South Dakota legislature, Berk returned to

Washington, DC, where he served as the Senior Digital Communications Manager for Friends of the Global Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, an advocacy nonprofit responsible for securing \$1.56 billion in annual appropriations for programs to fight infectious diseases globally. Berk came back to South Dakota to serve as Executive Director of a major political nonprofit. In his two years serving as Executive Director, he more than doubled election cycle expenditures, revitalized the organization's culture, improved operational and financial procedures, delivered robust programming and events, and achieved key electoral objectives. Berk lives in Sioux Falls, SD, with his wife, Keeley.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Brule County for once again collaborating with PorchLight. You provided necessary feedback throughout the duration of this project; this action plan is better because of it.

Thank you to the Brule County steering committee: Harold Bickner, Olivia Downs, Sheena Larsen, Brady Pazour, Christie Rasmussen, and Sharman Swanson. Your dedication to your communities and county is evident, and I appreciate the time you invested in this project.

Special thanks to Sheena Larsen for the foresight to build upon the Chamberlain-Oacoma Strategic Plan and extend the planning to the county.

This report was written by Jessica Meyers, and research was completed by Berk Ehrmantraut.