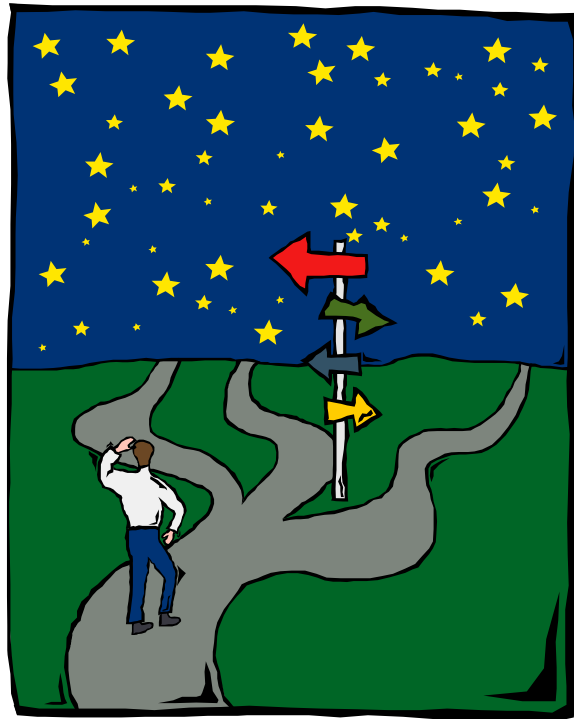




# STRATEGIC PLAN



***“CHANGING THE INSIDE TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE ON THE OUTSIDE”***

## **Strategic Plan**

The strategic plan was developed by the R9 Strategic Planning Committee. The members of the committee are:

Bob Roesler, Committee Chair

Jim Swanson, R9 Chair

Tim Strand, R9 Vice Chair

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## Purpose:

According to state statutes, 462.383, Subdivision 1. *“The legislature finds that problems of growth and development in urban and rural regions of the state so transcend the boundary lines of local government units that no single unit can plan for their solution without affecting other units in the region; that coordination of multi-jurisdictional activities is essential to the development and implementation of effective policies and programs; that intergovernmental cooperation is an effective means of pooling the resources of local government to approach common problems; and that the assistance of the state is needed to make the most effective use of local, state, federal, and private programs in serving the citizens of such urban and rural regions.*

*Subdivision 2. By creating regional commissions. It is the purpose of sections 462.381 to 462.398 to authorize the establishment of regional development commissions to work with and on behalf of local units of government to develop plans or implement programs to address economic, social, physical and governmental concerns of each region of the state. The commissions may assist with, develop, or implement plans or programs for individual local units of government.”*

Changes within the region and Region Nine Development Commission (R9) are unavoidable. Issues such as populations, resources, economics and culture continue to change.

Today, population changes are an unavoidable reality in the region, and also provide opportunity for R9 program services. In the past decade the region increased in population by a mere 4%. Some areas of the region experienced its third decade of population decline, while other areas increased.

A healthy population contributes to the workforce, ingenuity of communities, tax base, civic participation and other essential elements of a vibrant region. There are three major population dynamics in the region which are major driving forces directing the organization's efforts. Those three populations are:

- 1) aging population,
- 2) out-migration (brain drain) of young adults, and
- 3) migration/arrival of ethnically diverse peoples.

These three populations impact industries such as agriculture, technology, transportation, local business services, medical services and educational institutions.

Focusing R9's role for the future is a necessity. R9 has identified its strengths. It also is facing some very real and challenging problems and issues. This strategic plan will provide the road map for prioritizing regional needs and guide the development of an action plan to be approved by the Commission. It will demand that everyone both staff and commissioners, think and act in new ways. Working harder is not the answer. R9 must work 'smarter', by answering and then implementing a clearly understood and

supported strategic plan. In a presentation conducted by Tom Gillaspay, State Demographer, Minnesota is experiencing a “New Normal” that probably means: slower economic growth; slower growth of wages, portfolio incomes and profits; less consumption, more saving; retirements will create many of the job openings; skills mismatch will present a problem in replacing retiring workers; creative destruction/disruptive innovation are creating a new set of opportunities; and more uncertainty about the future.

The strategic plan was designed in response to current external realities and future trends impacting the region and internal feedback gathered from staff and commissioners. This plan is intended to provide a road map for proceeding forward and takes an inward to outward approach in strengthening R9 by determining what are the greatest needs of the local units of government in the region; and what can be funded. An action plan will be developed, implemented, and evaluated after acceptance and commitment to change is given by the Region Nine Development Commission. By acting on this plan, R9 will have a seamless service delivery system, improved communication internally and externally, and abilities matched with the needs of the region.

R9 exists to improve the quality of life for citizens in the region by serving and cooperating with local units of government.

The mission of the organization is *“to promote the development of the region through intergovernmental cooperation, community and human development, long-range planning and technical assistance.”*

We believe the region is a good place to live and work. R9 aims to contribute to being a positive resource for businesses through capitalization, while also serving and collaborating on basic human needs. R9 is also a voice for the region, seeing the bigger picture – needs across the region, trends we need to proactively respond to such as the brain drain of our young adults and college graduates, and aging seniors.

The Value Statements of R9 include:

Vision / Goals We will maintain a future-oriented perspective that helps to facilitate decisions which result in healthier and more prosperous communities that are better equipped to move forward into the future.

Accountability We are accountable to the public, our funding agencies and to each other for the quality of our work, promoting development of the region and being fiscally responsible.

Professionalism We promote, encourage and provide opportunities for development, leadership and mentoring at all levels of participation within the organization. We expect professionalism to be demonstrated by our behavior, conduct and loyalty.

Communications We value timely, open and honest communication to enhance organizational effectiveness.

Adaptability We embrace change and celebrate new challenges, are able to identify problems, look at the options and evaluate the consequences with a sense of purpose and future.

Diversity We value and respect the diversity of the region and of our organization.

Teamwork We support teamwork across the organization, lending knowledge and skill as needed to be successful and efficient.

**OBJECTIVES & PROGRAMS: What services will we offer to accomplish our purpose?**

- (1) What are the greatest needs of the local units of government in the region; and
- (2) What can be funded.

Utilizing what the greatest needs of the local units of government are and what can be funded; the Strategic Planning Committee has identified several key program areas that we recommend as being R9's focus of expertise. R9 will need to remain disciplined in adhering to these priorities and not let side ventures drain away focus or resources. However, should an issue arise from public or local jurisdictions, R9 will assist in developing solutions or addressing the issue. R9 may not be the end service deliverer, but it can play a role in developing solutions. By fostering intergovernmental relations, the R9 Commission serves as a means of bringing local government units (township, city, school, county, state and federal) together to work in a harmonious whole. The Commission will work to increase the effectiveness of helping the local government units work together as a region. The following are the programs identified as core areas for R9 to focus on and deliver exceptional results:

**AGING**

This program plays a leading role not only in our region but as the administrative lead for the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging®, Inc. Its mission is to be “the gateway to resources for older adults, caregivers and service providers in the twenty-seven counties of southwest Minnesota.”

**COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The goal of the Region Nine community and economic development program is to increase the number of good jobs and wealth in the region.

Region Nine accomplishes this by providing technical assistance to communities who are faced with obstacles in their economic development efforts. These obstacles may include lack of infrastructure, such as sewer and water, lack of good industrial plans, or a lack of specific information that would facilitate economic expansion. Region Nine works with communities to overcome these difficulties in the following ways:

- Providing technical assistance to local units of government and economic development authorities in planning and carrying out economic development strategies;
- Conducting studies and developing plans for communities that need specialized assistance for their economic development projects;
- Providing grant opportunity forums, quarterly meetings of Economic Development Professionals (public and private), and on-line resources that help keep our practitioners atop of funding opportunities and current trends;
- Serving as the region's only Federally recognized Economic Development District, thereby tapping into federal Economic Development funds for local economic development projects and then working with local communities to access these funds; and
- Providing the highest level of expertise at a fraction of the cost to local units of government.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Region Nine continues to play an important role in transportation planning all over south central Minnesota. Through a contract with Mn/DOT, Region Nine provides transportation and transit planning services throughout the 9-county region. We provide assistance with Safe Routes to School applications, functional classification requests, transit coordination, walkability initiatives and many other transportation and transit related projects.

## **REVOLVING LOAN FUNDS**

The primary goal of the revolving loan funds is to assist with the fixed asset and working capital financing of new and expanding businesses where a gap exists between the funds needed for start-up or expansion and the amount that can be raised through conventional sources. In addition, there are a number of secondary goals that are intended to improve the overall economic health of the area. Some of the additional goals include: increasing the number of jobs, increasing the tax base of communities, diversifying the economy, and returning to use good quality vacant commercial/industrial buildings.

Each loan fund has its own specific criteria, but the overall goals are the same.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS: What changes or actions are needed to make progress?**

### Leadership

1. The Commission - A commitment to R9's success will require strong leadership from the Commission. The capacity and ability of local jurisdictions working

harmoniously together across the region can only be fostered by representatives of local jurisdictions engaging in a meaningful way to create the type of region it desires and needs. Below are a few key steps recommended for Commissioners to lead down that path:

- Continually evaluate board development leadership
- Provide information to increase R9's visibility, project opportunities, and intergovernmental leadership
- Commission structure and function:

Committee Structure:

- Budget & Personnel
- Strategic Planning
- Legislative & External Communication
- Transportation
- Aging
- Community and Economic Development

Committee Functions:

- Each Commissioner will serve on one committee; and not more than two committees
  - Chair of the Commission will participate as a liaison on a committee but will not be the committee chair
  - Committees will select their own chairs, subject to approval by Board of Directors
  - Committees will meet at least 4 scheduled times per year (additional meetings as needed) to address issues, make recommendations to the Board of Directors and also respond to directives/requests coming from the Board of Directors
- The full Commission will meet at least 4 scheduled times per year (additional meetings as needed) and
  - An annual meeting will be conducted to review the annual achievements and accomplishments of R9
  - Election of "Board of Directors" of 10-12 will meet regularly and have authority from the overall Commission to act, review committee recommendations, and make decisions
  - Email and written communication will be used to improve commissioner's awareness of R9 programs and committee activities and actions.

## 2. Executive Director

- *Clear and consistent structure*
  - Hold regular staff and directors meetings
  - Organizational structure
  - Align personnel with organization direction
  - Develop organization wide accountability measures

- *Communication / Public Relations*
  - Ensure awareness and education on the inside and outside
  - Establish funding goals and allocate time to implement funding strategies
- *Administrative leadership support*
  - Establish and maintain effective working relationships with officials and employees of all levels of government, the business community, citizen organizations and with the general population of the region.
  - Use outside consultant for organizational leadership coaching/accountability feedback mechanism, as needed

### 3. Programs

- Strengthen core areas – first!
- Structure efficiency and effectiveness
- Develop indicators of accountability

### 4. Operations

- Develop heightened communication measures and consistent adherence to goals, staff meetings, policies and procedures
- Foster cross-marketing department efforts
- Develop integrated project outlines across all departments and how they impact the three core population areas
- Provide grant writer capacity
- Increase directors' external 'presence' in the region in order to create opportunities, identify needs among local units of government, follow-up with the grant writing (assist grant writer)
- Require staff have a continuing education/development plan.

## CONCLUSION:

### Future Direction

The strategic plan takes an inward to outward approach in strengthening R9. The purpose of the plan is to position R9 to be the best-qualified and most effective organization in fulfilling its mission.

By establishing a core focus on impacting “populations”, R9 creates a unique value that it brings to the region. R9 is positioned through its work with partners in the region to play a meaningful role in the health and vibrancy of the region.

Success will require commitment and hard work of the R9 Commissioners, staff and regional partners. Under the leadership of the R9 Commissioners, the Region Nine Development Commission will work with local units of government, private enterprise, non-profit and faith based organizations.

The strategic plan was designed in response to current external realities, unavoidable future trends impacting the region and internal feedback gathered from staff and commissioners. The plan is intended to provide a road map for proceeding forward. It is not an action plan. An action plan will be developed, implemented, and evaluated after acceptance and commitment to change is given by the Region Nine Development Commission. By acting on this plan R9 will have a seamless service delivery system, improved communication internally and externally, and abilities matched with the needs of the region.