



Commission Meeting

Wednesday, January 10, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.



COMMISSION MEETING

January 10, 2024 | South Central Service Cooperative
Dinner and Networking Time at 5:00 p.m. | Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

REVISED CONSENT AGENDA

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Action</u>
I. Call to Order	6:00		
II. Pledge of Allegiance			
III. Roll Call – <i>Secretary Branstad</i>			
IV. Approval of Consent Agenda			Action
A. October 11, 2023 Minutes		1	Action
B. Treasurer’s Report			Action
C. New Commissioner Approval			Action
V. Finance Director’s Report – <i>Ky Battern</i>	6:05	5	
A. Audit Presentation – <i>Layne Kockelman, Abdo</i>			
B. Approval of Annual Audit	6:15		Action
VI. Chair’s Report – <i>Chair Laven</i>	6:20		
A. Youth Commissioner, College Age – Internship			Action
B. Out of State Travel Approvals		9	Action
VII. Executive Director’s Report – <i>Nicole Griensewic</i>	6:30	11	
A. Organization Updates			
B. Transitioning Systems, Evolving Opportunities, w. Ken Smith CEO/ President Ever-Green Energy			
VIII. Other Business	7:50		
A. Commissioner Updates			
B. Meeting Evaluation		Handout	
IX. Adjournment	8:15		Action

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at South Central Service Cooperative, North Mankato, MN.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Elliot Belgard, Andrea Boettger, Dave Borchert, Steve Cooling, Marie Dranttel, Lyle Femrite, Paul Harris, Dawn Kratzke, Mike Laven, Christian Lilienthal, Mary Milbrath, Bob Nielsen, Shanon Nowell, Richard Peterson, Mike Pfeil, Gary Richter, Steve Rohlfig, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter, Rob Wilkening

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Jim Branstad, Chris Dalton, Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch and Patty O'Connor

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Holmseth, Tom Loveall, Michele Miller, Lisa Norton.

MEMBERS LATE: Sarah Berry, Ayan Omar

OTHERS PRESENT: Stephanie Hilpipre, Matt Peterson, Katelynn Kratz, Mike Humpel, Mercedes Sempe, Deanne Nelson, Nikki Benson, Tenille Jennings, Taylor Ziemke, Jason Bruns, Michael Johnson, Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Sam Sharp, Paola Ferrario, Joel Hanif, Kristian Braekkan, Corree Johnson, Nate George, Courtney Wright and Heather Bartelt

There was a quorum.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Belgard moved to approve the agenda as presented, Wilkening seconded. Motion carried.

V. APPROVAL OF JUNE 21, 2023 MINUTES

Nowell moved to approve the June 21, 2023 minutes as presented, Milbrath seconded. Motion carried.

VI. APPROVAL OF NEW COMMISSIONERS

A. Stephanie Hilpipre – Le Sueur County Townships

B. Matt Peterson – Nicollet County, City of North Mankato

Belgard moved to approve the New Commissioners. Schlueter seconded. Motion carried.

VII. TREASURER'S REPORT

Dranttel presented the Treasurer's Report.

Rohlfing moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Borchart seconded. Motion carried.

VIII. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Audit Update

Battern shared that the audit wrapped up the field work at the end of August.

Battern shared that Abdo is currently working on getting the financial statements in order.

Battern noted that ABDO is setting up a new process within their organization to allow quicker preparation for RNDC in future years.

Battern shared that RNDC is behind on spending the three-year USDA grant, however Battern highlighted that RNDC is working on spending down and completing that grant this year. Discussion followed.

Battern noted that ABDO will be attending a future Commission Meeting and going over the Audit in detail.

Battern shared that Courtney Wright was hired in August as the RNDC Lending Specialist.

IX. CHAIR'S REPORT

Laven reminded Commissioners to share the RNDC monthly E-Newsletter with individuals in their networks and to communicate with RNDC any updated email contact information when there are local leadership position transitions taking place.

Laven encouraged the Commission to take the RNDC APR Survey.

A. College-Age Youth Commissioner

Chair Laven introduced candidate, Katelynn Kratz. Kratz presented why she wanted to be the College-Age Youth Commissioner.

Lilienthal moved to approve the College-Age Youth Commissioner, Pfeil seconded.
Motion carried.

B. Commissioner Recognition – Blair Nelson & Richard Peterson

Laven recognized the family of former Commissioner Blair Nelson with a Certificate of Appreciation for his service to RNDC, as well as a Certificate of Memorial Trees Planted in his honor.

Laven recognized outgoing Commissioner Richard Peterson with a Certificate of Appreciation for his service to RNDC.

X. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Agriculture and Manufacturing Resilience: Where do we go from here?

Braekkan gave an overview of RNDC's economic resilience planning over the past five years and introduced two of the organization's project partners to illustrate how the work manifests itself at the local level. Jason Bruns from the Minnesota State's Center for Excellence in Engineering gave an overview of the Siemens program implemented at Waseca public schools to support engineering education, the Department of Defense funded ACE training for machining, LEAN curriculum, and cybersecurity training to be implemented through the Workforce Development Center in Waseca. Michael Johnson, Waseca County Administrator, then gave an overview of the process to secure funding for the ACE program through St. Cloud State and collaborations with the federal EDA to secure funding for renovations of a county-owned building to house said programming.

B. Out of State Travel Requests

Griensewic requested approval of out-of-state travel costs for Commissioner Boettger and RNDC employee Sam Sharp to attend the 2023 NADO Annual Training Conference (ATC) in Cleveland, OH. The travel would cost an estimated \$2350.37 and \$2553.76 respectively and was budgeted for.

Schafer moved to approve the Out-of-State NADO Travel Request, Rohlifing seconded.
Motion carried.

Griensewic requested approval of out-of-state travel costs to attend the GreenLab Delegation to Denmark from November 4-10, 2023. The travel would cost an estimated \$1332.55.

Schafer moved to approve the Out-of-State NADO Travel Request, Rohlifing seconded.
Motion carried.

Griensewic asked Corree Johnson to share news with the Full Commission. Johnson noted that she will be resigning from RNDC effective October 11. Johnson thanked the Commission for her time at RNDC.

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Commissioner Updates

Chair Laven asked for updates, if any.

B. Meeting Evaluation

Chair Laven reminded Commissioners to fill out the meeting evaluation handout.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

Femrite moved to adjourn, Milbrath seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27p.m.

Mike Laven, Chair

Marie Dranttel, Acting Secretary, & Board Treasurer

Finance Director's Report

January 10, 2024 Full Commission Meeting

Submitted by Ky Battern

Finance

- Work and discussions have begun on a FY24 Revised Budget. Actual staffing levels vary from that of the budget approved prior to the start of this current fiscal year making it difficult to accurately forecast budget outcomes. A revised budget will allow us to see the projected impact of these changes as well as other updates to revenues and expenditures as now known. Staffing changes from that originally anticipated include:
 - Additions:
 - Full-Time RLF Lending Specialist Position (Courtney Wright)
 - Part-Time Economic Development Assistant (Mercedes Sempe)
 - Temporary Full-Time Practicum Scholar (Saga Rydåker)
 - Part-Time Georgetown Fellow - \$1,600 total cost (Maggie Ahern)
 - Additional .50 FTE increase to Economic Development Director (Kristian Braekkan)
 - Promotion from Associate Planner to Community Development Planner (Sabri Fair)
 - Subtractions:
 - Full-Time Community Development Director (Position Never Filled)
 - Full-Time Communications Specialist (Position Never Filled)
 - One to two months of Administrative Assistant position not being filled.
- A refundable deposit of \$500 has been paid to Mankato Lead-Car Toyota for the order of a basic edition Toyota RAV4 Hybrid. The wait time is anywhere from 2 to 4 months as communicated.
- Year end work will begin in early January for the issuance of W2's and 1099's

Revolving Loan Fund

- RLF
 - Current Principal Outstanding = \$2,056,704
 - Approximately \$1.8M Available to Lend
- See Courtney Wright's Staff Report for more information regarding the Revolving Loan Fund.

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- Abod has begun work on the 990 for the year ending June 30, 2023.

Region Nine Development Commission
Balance Sheet
As of November 30, 2023

	General	Legacy RLF	CARES Act RLF	Auto Fund	Total
Assets					
Cash	\$ 259,622	\$ 1,918,520	\$ 122,491	\$ 81,113	\$ 2,381,746
Receivables					
Taxes - Current	303,553	-	-	-	303,553
General Accounts Receivable	49,578	-	-	-	49,578
Grants Accounts Receivable	285,878	-	-	-	285,878
Revolving Loan - Current	-	139,298	116,982	-	256,280
Revolving Loan - Long-Term	-	1,031,113	715,565	-	1,746,678
Revolving Loan - Delinquent	-	24,747	29,000	-	53,747
Capital Assets, Net of Depreciation	14,201	-	-	-	14,201
Prepays	21,108	-	-	-	21,108
Total Assets	933,940	3,113,678	984,038	81,113	5,112,769
Liabilities					
Accounts Payable	5,873	-	-	-	5,873
Due to Other Funds	(104,823)	110,243	(24,970)	19,550	-
Accrued Wages Payable	(1,214)	-	-	-	(1,214)
Accrued Payroll Liabilities	12,751	-	-	-	12,751
Unearned Revenue	111,212	-	-	-	111,212
Accrued Leave Payable	32,512	-	-	-	32,512
Variance to be Reconciled	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	56,311	110,243	(24,970)	19,550	161,134
Deferred Inflows of Resources					
Property Taxes Levied for Subsequent Year	51,562	-	-	-	51,562
Total Deferred Inflows of Resources	51,562	-	-	-	51,562
Fund Balances					
Non-Spendable - Prepaid Items	21,108	-	-	-	21,108
Restricted for Future Loans	-	3,003,435	981,872	-	3,985,307
Restricted Fund Balance	-	-	-	61,563	61,563
Unassigned	804,959	-	27,136	-	832,095
Total Fund Balances	826,067	3,003,435	1,009,008	61,563	4,900,073
Total Liabilities, Deferred Inflows of Resources and Fund Balances	933,940	3,113,678	984,038	81,113	5,112,769
	-	-	-	-	-

Region Nine Development Commission
Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes
As of November 30, 2023

	<u>General</u>	<u>Legacy RLF</u>	<u>CARES Act RLF</u>	<u>Auto Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Revenues					
Levy					
Taxes	280,959	-	-	-	280,959
Federal Grants					
EDA Planning Grant	13,016	-	-	-	13,016
Other Federal Grants	83,003	-	-	-	83,003
Transportation					
Transportation - MnDOT Contract	40,043	-	-	-	40,043
Transportation - Other	-	-	-	-	-
Other Grants	105,191	-	-	-	105,191
Contract Revenue	7,561	-	-	-	7,561
Deposit Interest & Dividends	7,038	17,576	1,093	-	25,707
Loan Interest Earned	-	24,561	4,025	-	28,586
Transfer Funds	(4,537)	6,547	(2,010)	-	-
Other Revenue	132	49.00	44	-	225
Total Revenues	<u>532,406</u>	<u>48,751</u>	<u>3,152</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>584,309</u>
Expenses					
Salary & Wages	321,325	29,181	-	-	350,506
Fringe Benefits	80,027	8,120	-	-	88,147
Indirect Costs	97,441	8,770	352	-	106,563
Consultants	135,343	-	-	-	135,343
Staff Travel	8,263	174	-	551	8,988
Supplies	3,096	60	-	-	3,156
Copying	1,205	-	-	-	1,205
Postage	229	-	-	-	229
Phone	691	-	-	-	691
Staff Development	5,311	843	-	-	6,154
Software	7,100	280	-	-	7,380
Dues, Membership, Registration	6,912	-	-	-	6,912
Marketing & Publication	6,550	-	-	-	6,550
Rentals	580	-	-	259	839
Bank Service Charges	2,344	1,727	602	-	4,673
Service Fees	1,703	-	-	-	1,703
Insurance	-	-	-	-	-
Legal Fees	4,200	125	770	-	5,095
Catering & Event Meals	1,414	-	-	-	1,414
Equipment	2,681	-	-	18,790	21,471
Commission					
Per Diems	2,200	-	-	-	2,200
Travel	4,650	-	-	-	4,650
Catering	733	-	-	-	733
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Bus Tour	7	-	-	-	7
Miscellaneous	2,214	-	248	45	2,507
Total Current	<u>697,179</u>	<u>49,280</u>	<u>1,972</u>	<u>19,645</u>	<u>768,076</u>
Debt Service					
Copier Lease Payment	1,886	-	-	-	1,886
Total Debt Service	<u>1,886</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,886</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>699,065</u>	<u>49,280</u>	<u>1,972</u>	<u>19,645</u>	<u>769,962</u>
Net Changes in Fund Balances	(166,659)	(529)	1,180	(19,645)	(185,653)
Fund Balances, July 1, 2023	<u>992,726</u>	<u>3,003,964</u>	<u>1,007,828</u>	<u>81,208</u>	<u>5,085,726</u>
Fund Balances as of November 30, 2023	<u>\$ 826,067</u>	<u>\$ 3,003,435</u>	<u>\$ 1,009,008</u>	<u>\$ 61,563</u>	<u>\$ 4,900,073</u>

Region Nine Development Commission
Board Payment Listing - November 2023

Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
116237	11/06/2023	Friesen's LLC dba Wooden Spoon	6.29	Food Sales Tax - INV 400
116238	11/06/2023	Spirited Journeys LLC	2,160.00	USDA NRCS Consultant Grant Work - October 2023 Hours - INV 680
116239	11/06/2023	Belgard, Elliot R	92.40	R9 TAC Meeting - 11/3
116240	11/06/2023	Thriveon Inc	3,711.96	IT Services - November 2023 - INV 181728
116241	11/06/2023	GHG Corporation	90.00	TeamKeeper Timesheet Software for November - INV 97100
116242	11/06/2023	Thriveon Inc	30.00	Progress Billing for 6 PC Refresh - INV 181616
116243	11/06/2023	GMS	245.00	GMS Accounting Software Monthly Services - INV 69102023
116244	11/06/2023	Friesen's LLC dba Wooden Spoon	330.26	USDA Growers Network Meeting Location & Food - 12/13 - INV 412
116245	11/06/2023	Living Earth Center	1,865.50	USDA NRCS Consultant Services - October 2023 Expenses - INV 1024
116246	11/06/2023	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	360.00	Janitorial Services for November 2023 - INV 16646
116247	11/06/2023	Brennan Properties of Minnesota	100.00	Half Day Room Rental for TAC Meeting - 11/3 - INV 1667
116248	11/06/2023	Metro Sales Inc	371.75	Copier Contract - 10/27/23 to 1/26/24 - INV 2391515
116249	11/06/2023	Neubau Holdings LLC	3,208.00	November 2023 Office Rent
116250	11/06/2023	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Contract Base Charge - November 2023 - INV 2392476
116251	11/06/2023	Spectrum	119.98	Internet Service - 10/22/23 to 11/22/23 - INV 0820665102323
116252	11/06/2023	Shred-It, C/O Stericycle Inc	138.63	Shredding Services - INV 8004984849
116253	11/06/2023	DM Stamps & Specialties	119.45	Engraved Plates for New Commissioners - INV 00549740
116254	11/06/2023	SFM	492.00	Workers Comp Installment - INV 3140207
116255	11/06/2023	Greater Mankato Area United Way	795.00	Engaged Member Annual Membership - 1/1/2024 to 12/31/2024
116256	11/06/2023	Xcel Energy	69.88	Electric Utilities - 9/14 to 10/15 - Inv 849432881
116257	11/06/2023	American Solutions for Business	34.48	Business Cards for Courtney Wright - INV 07029508
116258	11/06/2023	United Team Elite	175.00	Polos & 3/4 Sleeve R9 Shirts (5) - INV 8183
116259	11/06/2023	Blethen Berens	294.00	Legal Correspondence - September 2023 - INV 72
116260	11/06/2023	Kratz, Katelynne	59.65	Commissioner Orientation - 10/28
116261	11/06/2023	Hilpipe, Stephanie	66.20	Commissioner Orientation - 10/28
116262	11/06/2023	Wilkening, Rob	40.00	Commissioner Per Diem for 10/11
116263	11/15/2023	Wells Fargo	0.99	Apple iCloud Storage - 9/25 - NicoleG
			204.50	KLM Airline - Flight from Amsterdam to Copenhagen for Denmark Trip - 11/5 - NicoleG
			206.30	SAS Airline - Flight from Copenhagen to Amsterdam for Denmark Trip - 11/10 - NicoleG
116264	11/15/2023	Wells Fargo	476.00	American Planning Association - AICP and APA Memberships -
116265	11/15/2023	Wells Fargo	57.03	Hy-Vee FF - Gas for Traverse
116266	11/15/2023	Wells Fargo	204.10	USPS - Stamp Rolls and Certified Mail for Levy - 9/22 - KyB
			245.04	Adobe - 3 Acrobat Pro Licenses 9/25 - KyB
			81.68	Adobe - 1 Acrobat Pro License - 9/25 - KyB
116267	11/15/2023	Wells Fargo	17.25	Zoom - Zoom Pro 9/22 to 10/21 Subscription - 9/22 - HB
			22.60	Pet Expo - Laser Pointers for Transportation Meeting - 9/28 - HB
			41.87	Amazon - Paper, Kleenex - 9/27 - HB
			494.44	Kerfoot Canopy - Staff Wellness Activity - 10/3 - HB
			13.76	Amazon - Sharpies 12 Pack - 10/12 - HB
			30.21	Penguin Random House - Writing for Busy Readers hardcover book - 10/18 - HB
			52.80	Amazon - Notebooks, Flash Drives, Legal Pads - 10/12 - HB
116268	11/29/2023	Griensewic, Nicole	807.62	Denmark Energy Delegation - Airfare Reimbursement and Mileage to Airport
116269	11/29/2023	Wilkening, Rob	71.44	11/8 Board Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116270	11/29/2023	Lilienthal, Christian	176.94	10/11 & 11/8 Meetings - Per Diem & Mileage
116271	11/29/2023	Laven, Mike	40.00	11/8 Meeting - Per Diem
116272	11/29/2023	Schafer, Philip H	121.88	11/8 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116273	11/29/2023	Loveall, Tom H	85.85	11/8 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116274	11/29/2023	Femrite, Lyle	50.48	11/8 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116275	11/29/2023	Branstad, Jim	92.40	11/8 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116276	11/29/2023	Femrite, Lyle	50.48	11/27 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116277	11/29/2023	Lilienthal, Christian	88.47	11/27 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116278	11/29/2023	Loveall, Tom H	85.85	11/27 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116279	11/29/2023	Omar, Ayan	58.34	11/27 Meeting - Per Diem and Mileage
116280	11/29/2023	Richter, Gary	109.43	11/27 Meeting - Per Diem and Mileage
116281	11/29/2023	Harris, Paul	91.09	11/27 Meeting - Per Diem and Mileage
116282	11/29/2023	Belgard, Elliot R	92.40	11/27 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
116283	11/29/2023	Berry, Sarah	127.17	10/11 and 11/27 Meetings - Per Diems & Mileage
116284	11/29/2023	Xcel Energy	60.36	Electric Utility - 10/15 to 11/13
116285	11/29/2023	Shred-It, C/O Stericycle Inc	138.63	Shredding Services - INV 8005292967
116286	11/29/2023	Kruse, David	72.00	MADO Dashboard Development & Maintenance - INV KT2170
116287	11/29/2023	American Solutions for Business	457.93	Annual Report Printing - INV 07089046
116288	11/29/2023	Greater Mankato Growth Inc	795.00	Engaged Member Annual Membership - INV 71245
116289	11/29/2023	Greater Mankato Growth Inc	360.00	Young Professionals Membership - 1/1/24 to 12/31/24 - INV 71602
116290	11/29/2023	Spectrum	119.98	Internet Service - INV 0820665112323
116291	11/29/2023	Blethen Berens	770.00	RLF Legal Services - Account 12541.009 Statement No 1
116292	11/29/2023	Blethen Berens	216.00	General Employment Law - Acct 12541.003 Statement No 73
116293	11/29/2023	Verizon Wireless	183.14	ED Cell & Tablet Monthly Charges - INV 9948773189
116294	11/29/2023	iSpace environments	2,680.76	Office Furniture for Alejandra & Joel - Payment 2 of 2 - INV 26847
116295	11/29/2023	Neubau Holdings LLC	3,208.00	December Office Rent
116296	11/29/2023	CenturyLink	9.76	Toll Free Number Final Payment - INV 664430418
116297	11/29/2023	Friesen's LLC dba Wooden Spoon	171.29	USDA NRCS Room Rental & Pastries
116298	11/29/2023	Principal Life Insurance Company	339.69	Life Insurance Benefit Payment - Account 1125885-1001
116299	11/29/2023	Boettger, Andrea S	1,308.19	NADO Cleveland Trip Reimbursements - 4 Days Per Diem, Hotel, Parking, Lyft; CSM Meeting Per Diem - 11/2
116300	11/29/2023	U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security	460.00	I-129 Filing Fee - BEJARANO CUBILLOS
116301	11/29/2023	U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security	500.00	Anti-Fraud Fee - BEJARANO CUBILLOS
116302	11/29/2023	Greil Feist PLC	3,300.00	Admin & Legal Fees for H-1B Extension Petition
116303	11/29/2023	Southwest Regional Development Commission	100.00	2023 AMC Booth Rental
116304	11/29/2023	Rohlfing, Steve J	67.51	11/8 Meeting - Per Diem & Mileage
Check Total:			34,969.33	
Report Total:			34,969.33	



Out of State Travel Request

Reason For Travel:

NADO Policy Conference

Attendee:

Vice Chair Andrea Boettger

Dates of Travel:

March 10 & 14, 2024

Dates of Conference:

March 11-14, 2024

Location

Washington D.C.

<u>Type of Expense</u>	<u>Project Charged</u>	<u>Direct Charge/ Reimb</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Registration	Commission	Paid	\$510.00
Airfare & Baggage	Commission		600.00
Parking/Mileage	Commission		100.00
Hotel	Commission		1,100.00
Estimated Meals	Commission		300.00
Misc.	Commission		150.00
Estimated Total			\$ 2,760.00

Additional Information:

RNDC Commission Meeting – January 10, 2024

9



Out of State Travel Request

Reason For Travel:

NADO Policy Conference

Attendee:

Executive Director Nicole Griensewic

Dates of Travel:

March 9-15, 2024

Dates of Conference:

March 11-14, 2024

Location

Washington D.C.

<u>Type of Expense</u>	<u>Project Charged</u>	<u>Direct Charge/ Reimb</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Registration	General Fund	Paid	\$510.00
Airfare & Baggage	General Fund		662.80
Parking/Mileage	General Fund		100.00
Hotel	General Fund		1,650.00
Estimated Meals	General Fund		300.00
Misc.	General Fund		150.00
Estimated Total			\$ <u>3,372.80</u>

Additional Information:



Basic Information:

Out-of-State Travel Request Form

Justification:

Name:

Travel Reason/Event:

Travel Destination:

Date of Departure:

Date of Return:

Funding Source:

Anticipated Costs:

Airfare (Roundtrip)

Registration

Lodging

Meals/PerDiem

Mileage

Other

Other

Total Anticipated Cost of Out-of-State Travel Request

Employee Signature:

Date

Executive Director Signature:

Date

Per Region Nine Development Commission Personnel Policy Manual:

6.5 OUT OF STATE TRAVEL

It is recognized that out-of-state travel is necessary for the effective operation of RNDC. It is further recognized that active participation in national organizations, effectively influencing federal legislation, and participation in national training programs will require and warrant out-of-state travel for RNDC staff members and officials. Finally, it is recognized that as a recipient of private foundation or federal funding, RNDC, is often required to participate in the training and development opportunities afforded by the funding authority.

Notwithstanding, as a local unit of government that is accountable to the citizens of the region, out-of-state travel will be limited to those instances determined to be prudent, appropriate and essential to the delivery of RNDC programs or services. Therefore, the Board of Directors must approve the out-of-state travel of both RNDC commissioners and staff, up to and including the executive director.

To assist in the development of an annual budget, staff and RNDC commissioners are to identify the out-of-state travel necessary and expected to occur during the budget cycle. The finance director and executive director will utilize the estimates for budgetary purposes. Inclusion of anticipated travel expenses within an annual budget is not to be construed as affirmation or approval of the Board of Directors.

Requests for out-of-state travel shall be submitted to the executive director a minimum of one month before the expected date of departure. Such requests shall be made in the manner prescribed by the executive director. At a minimum, requests for out-of-state travel shall include the following information:

- Staff/commissioner(s) requesting authorization;
- Travel destination;
- Date of departure/return;
- Anticipated costs of transportation, lodging, per diems, etc.;
- Source(s) of funding; and
- Written justification/documentation of necessity.

Requests for out-of-state travel, recommended by the executive director, shall be presented to the Board of Directors for authorization, a minimum of one month before the expected departure. To take advantage of reduced airfares, earlier submission is encouraged. The Board of Directors shall either approve or deny requests without delay.

In those rare instances where it is deemed logistically impossible to abide by the notice requirements of this policy, the executive director and RNDC Chair shall be authorized to approve the out-of-state travel of staff members and RNDC commissioners. Following authorization by the executive director or RNDC Chair of the Board of Directors shall be notified at their next scheduled meeting.



Out-of-State Travel Request Form

Basic Information:

Name:	Paola Ferrario and Sam Sharp
Travel Reason/Event:	NREL- Energizing Rural Communities Prize two day training
Travel Destination:	Golden,Colorado
Date of Departure:	January 22rd
Date of Return:	January 25th
Funding Source:	General Fund

Anticipated Costs:

Airfare (Roundtrip)	MDW (Paola) and MSP (SAM)	to	DEN		\$ 239.00
	Description				Cost
Registration	NREL- Energizing Rural Communities Prize two day training				\$ -
Lodging	Total Nights	3	x	\$ 296.55	= \$ 889.65
	Total Days	6	x	\$ 75.00	= \$ 450.00
Meals/PerDiem	Total Miles	-	x	\$ 0.670	= \$ -
	Description				Cost
Other	Uber				\$ 250.00
Other	Description				Cost
Total Anticipated Cost of Out-of-State Travel Request					\$ 1,828.65

Employee Signature:

Paola Ferrario and Sam Sharp

1/3/2024

Date

Executive Director Signature:

Date

Justification:

For reference, this two-day training will cover the following topics:

- * Operating and financial models for community-owned energy systems, establishing goals and key performance indicators (KPIs), and developing approaches to energy audits and reporting.
- * Strategies and resources for obtaining upfront capital to finance an energy project, and options for recovering investments and generating revenue.
- * The basic principles of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), how they apply to federal financial assistance (including prize awards), and how to make project decisions with an understanding of environmental consequences and possible actions to protect the environment.
- * Factors to account for when determining the location and design of an energy project, including impacts on the electrical grid.

This training will allow Region Nine to have a better grasp on how to apply for the next grant opportunity available exclusively to winners of the NREL Prize for \$200,000.*

Per Region Nine Development Commission Personnel Policy Manual:

6.5 OUT OF STATE TRAVEL

It is recognized that out-of-state travel is necessary for the effective operation of RNDC. It is further recognized that active participation in national organizations, effectively influencing federal legislation, and participation in national training programs will require and warrant out-of-state travel for RNDC staff members and officials. Finally, it is recognized that as a recipient of private foundation or federal funding, RNDC is often required to participate in the training and development opportunities afforded by the funding authority.

Notwithstanding, as a local unit of government that is accountable to the citizens of the region, out-of-state travel will be limited to those instances determined to be prudent, appropriate and essential to the delivery of RNDC programs or services. Therefore, the Board of Directors must approve the out-of-state travel of both RNDC commissioners and staff, up to and including the executive director.

To assist in the development of an annual budget, staff and RNDC commissioners are to identify the out-of-state travel necessary and expected to occur during the budget cycle. The finance director and executive director will utilize the estimates for budgetary purposes. Inclusion of anticipated travel expenses within an annual budget is not to be construed as affirmation or approval of the Board of Directors.

Requests for out-of-state travel shall be submitted to the executive director a minimum of one month before the expected date of departure. Such requests shall be made in the manner prescribed by the executive director. At a minimum, requests for out-of-state travel shall include the following information:

- Staff/commissioner(s) requesting authorization;
- Travel destination;
- Date of departure/return;
- Anticipated costs of transportation, lodging, per diems, etc.;
- Source(s) of funding; and
- Written justification/documentation of necessity.

Requests for out-of-state travel, recommended by the executive director, shall be presented to the Board of Directors for authorization, a minimum of one month before the expected departure. To take advantage of reduced airfares, earlier submission is encouraged. The Board of Directors shall either approve or deny requests without delay.

In those rare instances where it is deemed logistically impossible to abide by the notice requirements of this policy, the executive director and RNDC Chair shall be authorized to approve the out-of-state travel of staff members and RNDC commissioners. Following authorization by the executive director or RNDC Chair of the Board of Directors shall be notified at their next scheduled meeting.

Staff Updates – January 2024

Please note that the report goes from December 14 – January 10

Nicole Griensewic

Participated in first NADO Executive Committee meetings in December. Has been helpful as NADO has recently reviewed benefits and compensation. Discussions like these are especially informative as RNDC and MADO look to ensure our practices and policies are updated and relevant.

Participated in a kick-off meeting of the NASEO-IEDC State Clean Energy-Based Economic Development Working Group on Dec. 19th. NASEO is the National Association of State Energy Offices as serves as a resource, sharing best practices, facilitating peer learning and consensus building. IEDC is the International Economic Development Council, having more than 4,500 members. The groups have complementary roles and expertise, & often share common goals, e.g. job creation, decarbonization, & advancing equitable & resilient community development.

Had a call with Phil Hansen, President of Global Minnesota. Their organization connects learning opportunities for international students, hosts delegations and much more. They have been impressed by our work and ability to create international partnerships. I was excited to share with him that Saga, our latest addition to the RNDC team will be flying in on Jan. 10th from Sweden. Saga can hopefully be introduced at the evening's Commission meeting.

U of M's Regional Sustainable Development Partnership program will be launching a new program, the Empowering Small Minnesota Communities (ESMC) program to support small communities in becoming well-positioned to benefit from federal, state and local investment. There is an informational webinar on Jan. 10th from 3-4 pm. RNDC staff will plan to sit in on the webinar and promote prior via social media.

Special thanks to Commissioner Wilkening for recruiting a potential Waseca County Township representative. Julie Tesch, who serves as the Executive Director of the Center for Rural Policy & Development, has expressed interest in serving. If able, her application to the commission will be in the meeting packet.

Alejandra Bejarano

Alejandra presented the final Annual Performance Report (APR) to R9's board and the workforce council, obtaining resolutions from each to include the final planning

document and submitting it to the EDA. The final planning document will be made available on R9's website to accompany the 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

R9 was identified as a partner in Greater Mankato Growth's application to DEED's Drive for Five Program. As part of this grant application, R9DC will be responsible for creating and implementing a training program designed for regional employers aiming to recruit and retain international students in the area, aligning with the funding request through DEED. Alejandra, with support from Mireille and Mercedes, submitted a project proposal to GMG.

Alejandra, in collaboration with Kristian, is exploring funding opportunities through the USDA's Rural Business Development program. This effort serves as a continuation of the informal economy project in which R9DC is involved with HACER and the University of Minnesota Extension. The overarching goal is to further enhance entrepreneurial and business development technical assistance in the region.

In January, R9 staff will start working with Sibley County to develop a county-wide Strategic Economic Development Plan.

Alejandra continues to lead the workforce task force with support from other staff. In January, a student and employer survey will be deployed by R9 and its partners to gather more input on the hiring and recruitment of international students in the region. As part of this work, the University of Minnesota Extension is interested in collaborating with our R9 to develop and implement in-person training sessions for employers across the state. Alejandra is working with UMN Extension staff to design these trainings that will be hosted in the spring of 2024.

Kristian Braekkan

Kristian and Mireille started the feasibility study for the NUBRIC study and hope to conclude this work by late February/early March. Kristian has also been working with Mercedes and Maggie (Georgetown University impact scholar) on finalizing the Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP) for the Faribault County plan with the intent of presenting the plan to the County by March. He facilitated a workshop with Sibley County board members on January 2nd to discuss areas of focus for their SEDP. In December, Kristian began working with Aaron, Maggie, and Saga (intern) and the University of Minnesota on a supply chain study for agriculture/food production – a study that will conclude mid-summer 2024. He has also engaged in

conversations with SMIF and U of M Extension regarding possible R9 engagements in the proposed *Pathways to Prosperity* project initiated by SMIF.

Sabri Fair

A local farm that Sabri supported with grant writing and business plan development was awarded a \$100,000 grant to construct a walk-in cooler, freezer, and farm store in Brown County. This facility will allow them to increase the production of bison and heirloom varieties of corn that they sell to indigenous communities across Minnesota. Over the past years, the growth of their business has been limited by storage capacity even as they rented space from other local farmers.

Sabri has continued working on the Regional Food System Action Plan which will be submitted to the Regional Food Business Center on December 30th. This plan will guide Sabri's work in the coming years as R9 seeks to grow a stronger regional food system.

As part of the local food purchase assistance grant, Sabri was able to purchase 70 turkeys that a local farmer was unable to sell for Thanksgiving. Those turkeys will be utilized by South Central MN Food Recovery and be turned into ready to eat meals distributed to food shelves across the region.

Sabri and Samuel have continued their planning efforts with the Comfrey Climate Resilience Plan. The next step of the process will be working with the resilience committee to develop action items. These action items will be based on the community survey responses which were answered by 30% of the 180 households and businesses it reached.

Paola Ferrario

Paola, alongside Sam and the R9 team, has secured a grant award of up to \$290,000 from the Minnesota Department of Commerce through the State Competitiveness Fund: Local Grant Development Assistance Program. This grant will allow Region Nine to support local communities with technical assistance and grant writing in the pursuit of equitable and inclusive energy solutions, aiming to compete for Inflation Reduction Act funding.

Paola is working on the BDO zone certification results with Sam Sharp. The draft results are being circulated with the Independent Review Committee (IRC). The IRC's role is to function as a peer-review group to provide feedback and any technical comments on the rating. Paola is engaged in reaching out to companies to

explore synergies between Sustainable Aviation Fuel and ethanol plants. Additionally, she is conducting outreach with biogas companies, aiming to attract biodigesters and investment to the region.

In January Paola will continue to work on outreach to companies and work closely with Sam, Nate and Ecostrat to create a marketing campaign to advertise the rating obtained, the first one in Minnesota.

Nathan George

Nathan ended December by finalizing the 2023 Annual Performance Report (APR) with Alejandra and Mireille. The APR analyzes the last year's work and how it aligns with the CEDS. Nathan's role was editing, layout, and the final design.

Nathan also worked with Paola and Sabri to conclude the Mainstreet Business Focused on Food and Agriculture. This project used the hub and spoke model and RNDP was responsible for the Needs Assessment. Nathan reviewed, edited, and finalized the design. He also attended the wrap-up meeting to answer any questions from the other spokes.

Nathan has been working with Mercedes to promote and facilitate a survey for Faribault County. This has included designing promotional materials, as well as laying out and printing the surveys. He is also working with Alejandra and Mercedes for international students regarding their experiences in the workforce.

In January, Nathan will be focusing on updating the website. This will entail uploading the new documents, updating information, and SEO initiatives. He is also covering some of the tasks that need to be done until the Executive Assistant role is filled.

Mireille Ghassan

Mireille has picked up some extra hours, helping with executive assistant tasks until the position is filled. Mireille is working with Corree to organize the full commission meeting on January 10th.

Along with Nate and Alejandra, Mireille helped wrap up the APR report, which was presented at the Board of Directors meeting on December 13th. During that meeting, Mireille helped with set up, taking minutes, and organizing all documents to be put into the computer.

Mireille has been working with Alejandra and Mercedes on the Workforce Taskforce. Surveys are ready to be deployed after the new year. Working on developing a list of businesses we could send the employer survey to as well as creating a list of events where we could promote the survey.

Mireille is also working with Kristian on some grant writing for an EDA grant for the Workforce Taskforce which would help develop a workforce resilience plan and help with the work Alejandra is doing for the taskforce.

Mireille continues to work with Kristian on the NUBRIC project. We are moving into the feasibility study stage which will examine the critical aspects of the project and determine its success.

Joel Hanif

Joel's work continues on the Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Safe Routes to School Plan. The project is still in the data collection and analysis phase, and the next team meeting will be in February. Joel has met with Brown-Nicollet-Le Sueur-Waseca and Rice County SHIP to discuss progress and plan for upcoming activities for the plan.

Joel has been meeting with Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop Schools, the City of Gibbon, and Sibley County and assisting with the school district's Safe Routes to School Infrastructure application. MnDOT advised GFW Schools to proceed with a full application after reviewing their Letter of Intent. Joel is primarily providing support to the superintendent with assistance on grant language.

Joel has been exploring possible projects for a U.S. DOT RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) Grant, an opportunity that can fund both planning and infrastructure projects.

Joel is also working on organizing the next quarterly RDO Transportation Planners meeting in February. He is currently working with the co-chair to identify and schedule speakers for this virtual meeting.

Aaron Pacheco

Aaron is working on a supply chain project with Kristian Braekkan and a team from University of Minnesota and University of Redlands which examines how investing in particular sectors of industry in one area can impact another region formerly considered unrelated. The project is designed to observe how smaller areas, like

Region Nine, leverage investment and improve productivity through interconnected networks and supply chains of the greater Midwest (and ultimately beyond). Examples include investments in medical device manufacturing in Region Nine building networks with related industries in northern Minnesota and Chicago, boosting the effectiveness of investment in such local industries. While the first pilot study was circled around medical device manufacturing, this project scope, currently in design stage, will be expanded to include other significant industries in agriculture and manufacturing.

Mercedes Sempe

Mercedes has worked on the Taskforce project, helping launch surveys in early January and creating materials for promoting them. She also organized a tabling event at MNSU with the same purposes.

Mercedes met with the COPAL group to discuss ways to work together with R9 on common projects and interests.

She also continued working on the Faribault needs analysis and visited businesses in the City of Blue Earth to share the survey with them. She started organizing visits to the local high school and senior center as well.

Sam Sharp

Samuel has continued his work facilitating the BDO Zone Rating and will be working with Paola to begin promoting the rating score to attract biofuel companies to the region. This outreach will include connecting farmers and manufacturers, regional stakeholders, and investors/developers in the biofuels space interested in coming to the region.

Samuel and Sabri have continued their planning efforts with the Comfrey Climate Resilience Plan and will begin introducing project ideas and concepts for the community to consider based on responses from surveying efforts completed in early December. Samuel and Sabri will provide example projects accompanied by funding sources and educational materials to inspire the community to come to their specific project ideas they would like to see implemented in Comfrey.

Samuel will be working to develop a coalition for the EPA's *Climate Pollution Reduction Grant* (CPRG) alongside Sabri and other RDO partners to submit an application focused on providing solar for community wastewater treatment plants

and municipal buildings across the region. These efforts will be carried out over the next few months, and the application will be submitted by April 1st, 2024.

With the federal sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) grant application pending review, Samuel and Paola have been coordinating efforts to speak with biofuel companies and subject matter experts to explore the possibilities for producing SAF within the region. Moreover, with the recent federal incentives for ethanol-to-SAF production, Samuel and Paola will be working to connect with ethanol producers within the region to understand their perspectives and strategies and to explore the potential for collaboration on SAF production.

Lastly, Samuel has been working with the Climate Smart Saint James (CSSJ) group to connect them to resources and opportunities as they navigate the implementation of sustainable initiatives. Samuel will be supporting CSSJ as they provide educational events from January through May, in addition to hosting an “Earth Week” in April that will provide engaging and interactive activities for the Saint James community.

Courtney Wright

Courtney attended the loan closing for NGSW Properties LLC in December.

Courtney met with a few bankers to discuss Region Nine’s RLF Program and partnerships with banks. She met with Jim Van Deusen, President of Cornerstone Bank in Madison Lake, and Billy Exline, President of Cornerstone Bank in Eagle Lake.

Courtney will be attending the RLF Operators Meeting in Fergus Falls in January.

Courtney is working with a couple of other business clients to gather information for their loan applications. We are hoping to present these loans to the Loan Committee within the next couple of weeks.

Terms & Abbreviations

APR – Annual Performance Reports (CEDS)	MAPO – Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization
ATP – Area Transportation Partnership	MCLA – Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
AURI – Agricultural Utilization Research Institute	MDH – Minnesota Department of Health
BDO – Bioeconomy Development Opportunity	MnDOT – Minnesota Department of Transportation
CRP – Carbon Reduction Program	MnSCU – Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System
CEDS – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	MPCA – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
COPAL – Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Acción Latina (Communities Organizing Latino Power and Action)	MSA – Metropolitan Statistical Area
CGMC – Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities	MSU-M – Minnesota State University, Mankato
CSET – College of Science, Engineering & Technology	MYLAP – MN Young America Leaders Program
CSM – Climate Smart Municipalities	NEA – National Endowment for the Arts
CSSJ – Climate Smart St. James	NEH – National Endowment for the Humanities
CTS – Center for Transportation Studies	NUBRIC – New Ulm Business Resource Innovation Center
DEED – Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development	NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Services
DHS – Minnesota Department of Human Services	PI - Prosperity Initiative
DOE – Department of Energy	PROTECT – Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation
EDA – Economic Development Administration	REDA – Regional Economic Development Alliance
EDD – Economic Development District	REV – Rural Entrepreneurial Venture
GAC – Gustavus Adolphus College	RLF – Revolving Loan Fund
GIS – Geographic Information Systems	RNAI – Region Nine Area Inc.
GMG – Greater Mankato Growth	RNDC – Region Nine Development Commission
GMDC – Greater Mankato Diversity Council	SACE – Southern Agricultural Center for Excellence
GMNP – Greater Minnesota Partnership	SAF – Sustainable Aviation Fuel
HACER – Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research0	SBDC – Small Business Development Center
IRC – Independent Review Committee	SCC – South Central College
LGU – Local Government Unit	SHIP – Statewide Health Improvement Partnership
LMI – Labor Market Information	SMIF – Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
LMI – Low-to-Moderate Income	SRTS – Safe Routes to Schools
MADO – Minnesota Association of Development Organizations	STIP – State Transportation Improvement Program
	TAC – Transportation Advisory Committee