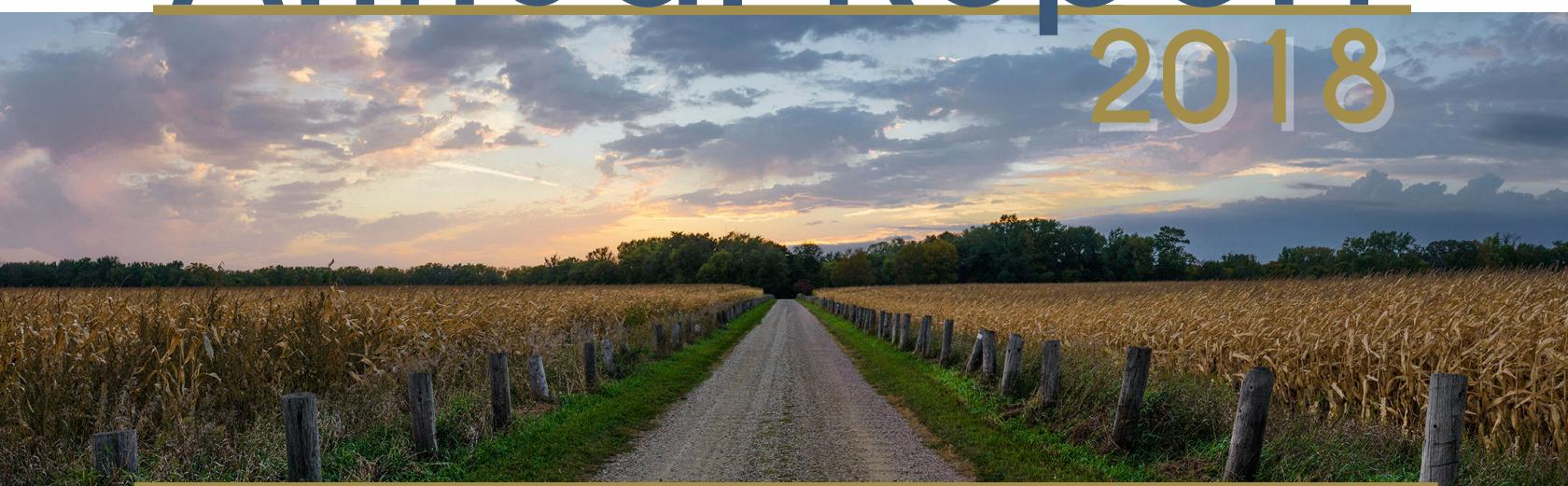




Annual Report

2018



9
COUNTIES

33
SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

72
CITIES

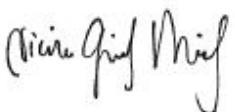
147
TOWNSHIPS

Region Nine has a new look. The updated logo, revised website, and new office space reflect the dynamic changes occurring in this growing organization. While invigorating, these changes have not distracted us from the core mission of serving communities and constituents across south central Minnesota. Within this Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report, you will find numerous examples of how our team partners with diverse individuals and institutions to deliver consistent and sustainable progress.

As a signal of our success, Region Nine won its fourth consecutive Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations. Additionally, we were honored to receive the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's Partner of the Year Award. These awards recognize Region Nine's continuous self-improvement and our commitment to supporting our communities.

Thank you for a fantastic Fiscal Year 2018, and I look forward to what Fiscal Year 2019 brings.

Sincerely,



Nicole Griensewic Mickelson
Executive Director



INNOVATION



Serving as the chair for Region Nine provides a unique opportunity to see firsthand the impacts the organization makes throughout the region. This past fiscal year, Region Nine has been a part of a substantial range of projects from broadband to rural equity. The flexibility of the organization to accommodate the region's changing needs is what makes it such an asset.

The talented staff of Region Nine are a vital part to the organization's success. This annual report showcases a few unique projects we have going on this past fiscal year for the region. I am eager to see what new solutions we address in regard to regional issues in the coming years.

Sincerely,

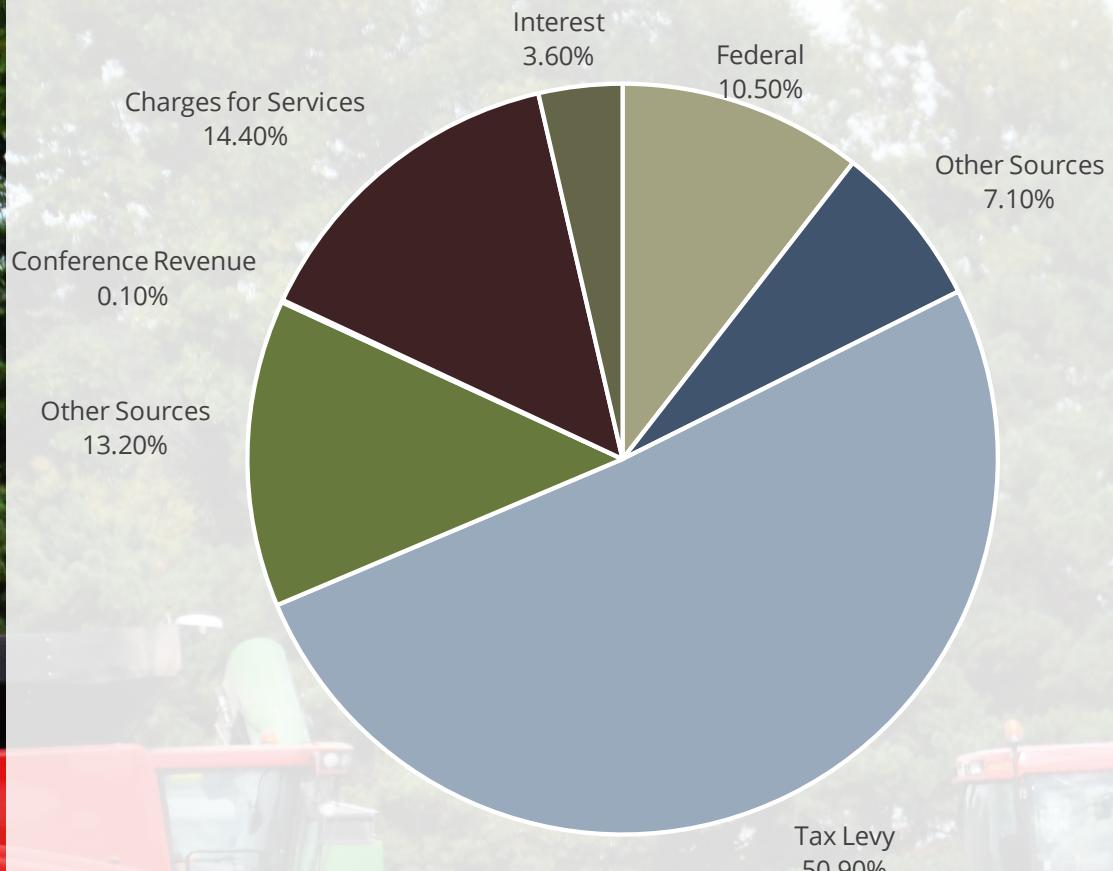
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve J. Rohlwing".

Steve Rohlwing
Commission Chair

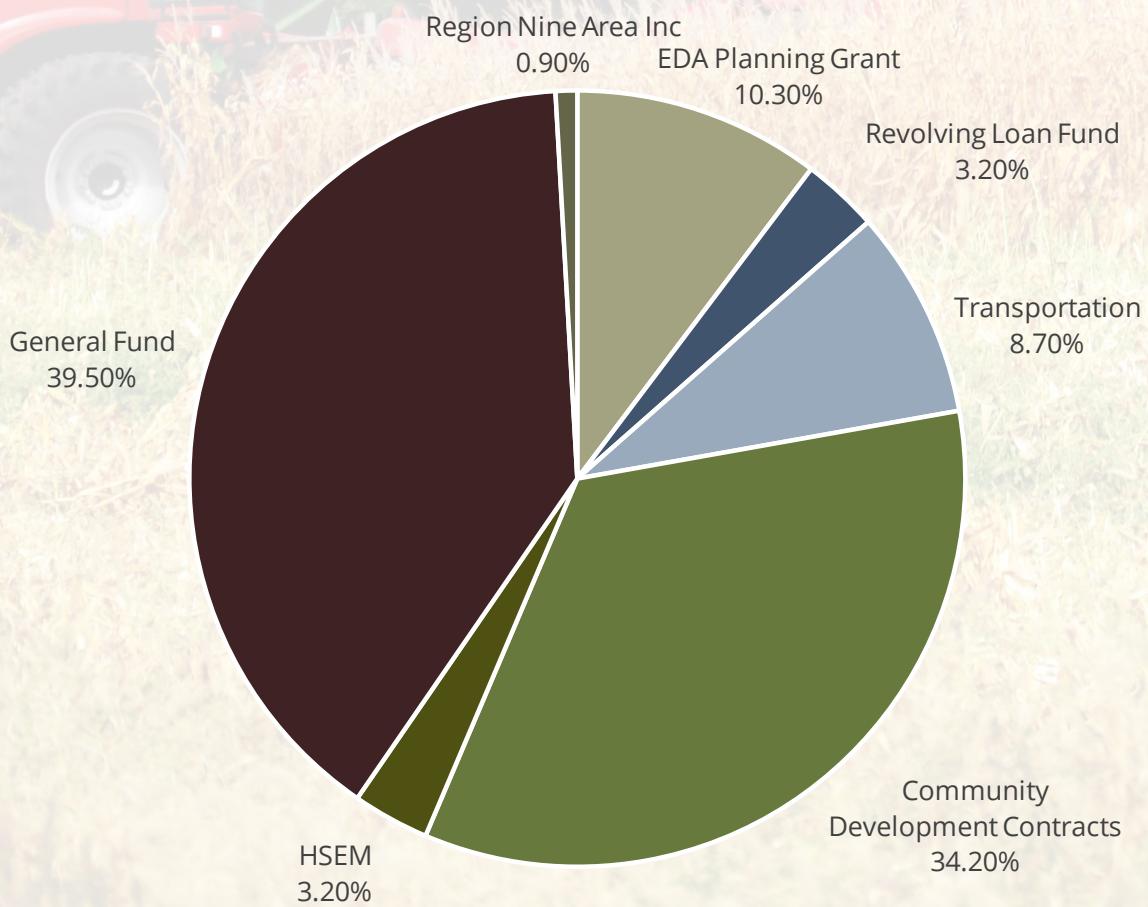


Actual FY2018 Revenue by Source

Total Revenue \$1,113,483



Actual FY2018 Revenue by Department



Project Highlights

South Central Minnesota Grower's Network

Successfully running your own business can be a difficult and lonely experience. That is why in 2017 Region Nine launched the South Central Minnesota Grower's Network. The network gathers food and agriculture business owners to help them develop a core of solid business relationships that result in bottom line benefits and professional growth.

The Grower's Network provides access to others with similar perspectives and experiences who can offer critical insight and advice without hidden agendas. Member companies are not competitors nor do they use the venue to sell professional services, instead acting as trusted advisors amongst one another. There are currently 10 active members in the network.



Broadband Summit

Access to high-speed internet is essential to the development of the regional economy and quality of life in south central Minnesota. While there are many challenges, some have broken through barriers to achieve success.

In April, Region Nine hosted the first Connect Rural Broadband Summit to assess the challenges, share success stories and identify action steps for the future. Senator Tina Smith shared her perspective from the federal level as well as listened to attendees concerns and needs. Community leaders, business owners and services providers who attended left with a better understanding of the current status of broadband in south central Minnesota and a plan for moving forward.

Sixth Annual Bus Tour

In June, Region Nine held its sixth annual regional bus tour. The day began with a legislative panel featuring seven area legislators sharing their thoughts about this past legislative session.

The tour's first stop was Sleepy Eye where participants learned about the history of the community. They also heard how Region Nine Area Inc.'s fiscal sponsorship was able to assist the Sleepy Eye Rural Fire Association in the purchase of a new fire truck. The local chamber director and EDA coordinator also shared the innovative solutions Sleepy Eye is pursuing in downtown revitalization and childcare needs. Olmar Diary Farm was the final stop in Sleepy Eye where owner Jill Nelson shared her passion for the family farm and the struggles that they have experienced with the dairy industry.

The next community on the tour was the City of St. James. Participants received an overview from MnDOT on the unique downtown mini-roundabouts and reverse-angle parking. There were also presentations by the St. James Chamber of Commerce and the Uniting Cultures group. The Region Nine hosted forum, It's Time to Talk Forum on Race, was the catalyst for the Uniting Cultures group forming. Since their formation they have held a multicultural fiesta as well as several other events promoting multiple cultures in the community.

The tour concluded with a visit to downtown Madelia to see the recently rebuilt businesses that were destroyed by the February 3, 2016 fire. Throughout the day attendees learned about Region Nine projects and partnerships.



PARTNERSHIPS

PROGRESS



MedTech Connect

Region Nine has completed a series of interviews with business leaders in medical manufacturing throughout the area and conducted an economic assessment of the industry in Region Nine as part of an Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP) initiative. A series of recommendations have been formulated to bolster employment, gross domestic product, workforce development, and regional engagement in this booming industry.

This project is known as MedTech Connect because of the project's emphasis on connecting producers across Region Nine to each other and to medical device manufacturing communities in Minneapolis-St. Paul and Rochester. Future grant applications to implement these findings are likely forthcoming in Fiscal Year 2019.

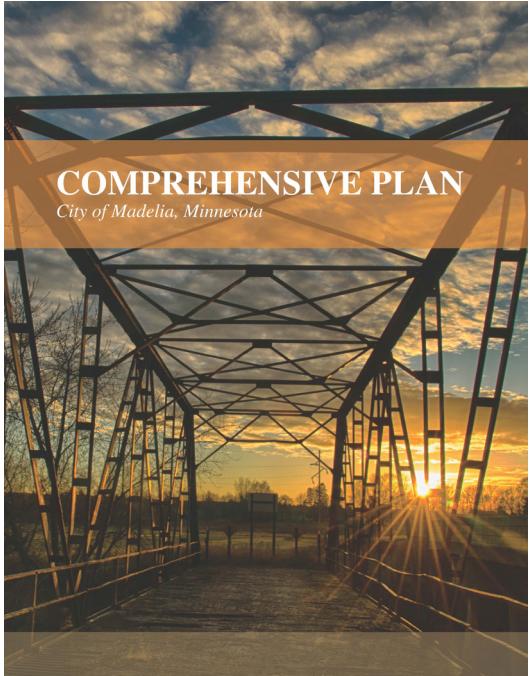
Le Sueur & Rice Active Living Profile

Active living plans look specifically at how an area can be improved for people interested in walking and biking. Improved health through more physical activity is the primary objective for Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) funding of these plans, but increased walking and biking traffic can also benefit local businesses and create a more appealing environment for visitors. By working with SHIP, Region Nine has delivered plans across the region which identify and prioritize active transportation improvements.

Region Nine worked jointly with Le Sueur and Rice Counties to complete a joint active living profile due to the counties' willingness to work together and the connections between communities within the same school districts. The planning process relied on a public outreach surveys marketed between the two counties and collecting data which better helps define local needs. The final document is intended to provide a starting point for developing community active living initiatives and improving bike connections between cities.



Madelia Comprehensive Plan



A comprehensive plan is a collection of information and materials designed to guide the future development of a city or county. Typically a comprehensive plan will provide general policy guidelines regarding transportation, utilities, land use, recreation, and housing. Once the plan is in place, it is meant to be a living document and can be updated when necessary to continue to provide an accurate picture of the community's goals.

Due to the generous support from the Blandin Foundation, the city of Madelia, in partnership with Region Nine, worked with the community to develop a comprehensive plan. The city of Madelia's comprehensive plan is focused around the city's goals and strategies that will shape a bright future for the city. The comprehensive plan serves not only as a guiding document for the city of Madelia, but as a collective expression of community values, desires and visions.



Rural Equity Learning Community Project

In response to a growing regional demand for equity education, Region Nine, with generous support provided by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN Foundation and the Blandin Foundation, collaborated in a design team with Greater Mankato Diversity Council and the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality, to plan, design, and facilitate a training with 45 regional stakeholders in a collective learning cohort. Participants represent their local community group and engage in small and large group interactive learning over seven months.

COMMUNITY

Revolving Loan Funds

Region Nine administers a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to assist existing businesses as well as entrepreneurs in securing financing they are otherwise unable to secure through traditional channels. The primary goal of the RLF program is to create new jobs in the region. Region Nine often partners with other lenders to assist local area businesses.

Region Nine approved five new business loans over the course of the past year. As a result, **15 new jobs** are expected to be added to the region.

Loans were approved for businesses in the following counties:

- Brown (3)
- Le Sueur (1)
- Waseca (1)



Loan Recipients Isabel & Raul, owners of Chabelita's Yummy Foods and Fruits located in Le Sueur



Commissioners

Blue Earth County

Brad Ahrenstorff, *Cities under 10,000*
Drew Campbell, *County Commissioner*
Eric Anderson, *City of Mankato*
Lyle Femrite, *Township Board*

Brown County

Charles Schmitz, *City of New Ulm*
Gary Richter, *Cities under 10,000*
Robert Goblirsch, *Township Board*
Tony Berg, *County Commissioner*

Faribault County

Doug Trytten, *Cities under 10,000*
Steve Holmseth, *Township Board*
Tom Loveall, *County Commissioner*

Le Sueur County

Chuck Nickolay, *Cities under 10,000*
Richard Peterson, *Township Board*
Steve Rohlwing, *County Commissioner, (Chair)*

Martin County

Elliot Belgard, *County Commissioner*
Jeff Ross, *Cities under 10,000*
Phil Schafer, *Township Board, (Vice Chair)*
Ruth Cyphers, *City of Fairmont*

Nicollet County

Chuck Zieman, *City of St. Peter*
Jim Whitlock, *City of North Mankato*
Marie Dranttel, *County Commissioner*
Pam Rodewald, *Cities under 10,000*
Terry Genelin, *Township Board*

Sibley County

Doug Munsch, *Cities under 10,000*
Jim Swanson, *County Commissioner, (Treasurer)*
John Pioske, *Township Board*

Waseca County

Blair Nelson, *County Commissioner*
Daren Arndt, *Cities under 10,000*
Laurel Remund, *Township Board*

Watonwan County

Gary Sturm, *Cities under 10,000, (Secretary)*
Ray Gustafson, *County Commissioner*
Steven Cooling, *Township Board*

Public Interest Groups

Ayan Omar, *Youth Alternate*
Brian Gramentz, *MN Valley Council of Governments*
Chera Sevcik, *Health & Human Welfare*
Jim Grabowska, *School Boards*
Mike Pfeil, *School Boards*
Mohamed Ibrahim, *Minority Populations*
Olivia Lippert, *Youth*
Seasame Glackler-Riquelmae, *Youth*

*Striving to promote the development of the region through
intergovernmental cooperation, community and human
development, long-range planning and technical assistance.*

Staff



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