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REGION NINE
 DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION



2018 Annual Performance Report

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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About Region Nine Development Commission

Region Nine Development Commission (RNDC) serves nine counties in South Central Minnesota: Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan. RNDC takes great pride in working with and on behalf of these counties, their cities, townships, and school districts. Since 1972, being a partner for progress has led to the development of programs in the areas of economic development, business development, healthy communities, transportation, community development and leveraging regional resources. RNDC is governed by 40 regional leaders. These leaders include elected officials representing nine counties, 72 cities, 147 townships, 32 school districts, the Minnesota Valley Council of Governments, and public interest groups including, Health and Human Welfare, Minority Populations, and Youth.

Region Nine receives an annual planning grant from the Federal EDA to conduct economic development planning activities within the district. Activities range from developing and maintaining the CEDS, leading regional-based economic development goals and strategies, facilitating the regional Community and Economic Development Planning Committee, hosting regional grant opportunities forums, workforce forums, and assisting communities who are interested in seeking Federal EDA funding.



Introduction

This annual performance report analyzes Region Nine's current economic conditions and serves as an update on the region's progress and updated prioritization of the goals, strategies, and action steps outlined in the 2016-2021 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS and annual performance report is posted in accordance to EDA's regulations found in the Federal Register at 13 C.F.R. part 303.

RNDC works closely with a number of organizations and institutions to take a comprehensive inventory of economic and employment-related changes in South Central Minnesota throughout the year. This also includes working with RNDC's commissioners to monitor changes at county, city, and township levels of analyses, and particular challenges faced by communities that experience plant closures, lay-offs, and general economic distress.

Although the region is performing relatively well at the aggregate level with respect to employment, there are areas within the region that face challenges. RNDC seeks to identify dynamics that the region needs to address for the economy to continue to prosper. Specifically, there are concerns about areas that are experiencing high employment, but with relatively high poverty rates. In Region Nine, more than three out of four Hispanic and Black or African American residents live in poverty despite the overall poverty rate being in the single digits. This indicates the need to address equity issues and equal access to economic initiatives in the region.

RNDC's Community and Economic Development Committee (CEDC) convened on September 28 to review the cornerstones of the current CEDS. This committee, consisting of members from all nine counties, represents public and private entities. Although great progress has been made, there were four categories that the committee would like to see addressed going into 2019:

1. Economic disparities are high, not only in the metro areas, such as Mankato, but also in smaller towns.
2. The need for job training is evident throughout the region. Many employers find it difficult to locate qualified labor. Most notably, manufacturers struggle to scale their operations as they need more engineers, electricians, welders, and certified machine operators.
3. Many areas within RNDC boundaries are considered child care deserts, which impede hiring processes as families are unable, or unwilling, to relocate or remain in the region without adequate or affordable child care.
4. The rate of young people leaving the region is a concern. Although Region Nine has several colleges and a university, many choose to leave for employment elsewhere following graduation.

The CEDS and consecutive annual performance reports will ultimately enhance and support current and future economic development efforts in the region and engage local, regional, state, and federal partners. Region Nine and its public, private and non-profit partners will champion and advance effective, sustainable, and resilient rural economic development in South Central Minnesota.

Regional Overview

The regional overview features demographic statistical analysis which serve as important details for crafting economic development strategies. This data has been obtained through a variety of local, state and national sources. While demographics are constantly ebbing and flowing, trends appear in Region Nine. Urban areas are attracting people, especially racial and culturally diverse populations. These urban areas include the Mankato-North Mankato Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as well as additional cities throughout the region which are explored more later in the section. Rural areas are losing people to out-migration and their populations are aging. Additionally, it is apparent that rural residents are also more likely to live in poverty than their urban resident counterparts.

	County Population									
	Blue Earth	Brown	Faribault	Le Sueur	Martin	Nicollet	Sibley	Waseca	Watonwan	
2011	63,370	25,926	14,690	27,754	20,821	32,471	15,219	19,154	11,190	
2016	65,524	25,327	14,119	27,650	20,193	33,226	14,957	19,034	10,996	
Percent Change	3.40%	-2.31%	-3.89%	-0.37%	-3.02%	2.33%	-1.72%	-0.63%	-1.73%	

Region Nine's population was projected at 238,453 persons in 2018. Of the seven-county area, only Blue Earth and Nicollet county have experienced growth between 2012 and 2017. This is due to their location in the MSA. In fact, the MSA is predicted to account for most of Region Nine's density, accounting for more than half of the region's total population by 2020. Additionally, densely urban places are located throughout the region, serving as cultural hubs, but only seven of the seventy-two cities have populations over 5,000.

Region Nine's 7 Largest Cities

Mankato	39,857
North Mankato	13,399
New Ulm	13,522
Waseca	9,413
St. Peter	11,189
New Prague	7,319
Fairmont	10,671

Region Nine's 7 Smallest Cities

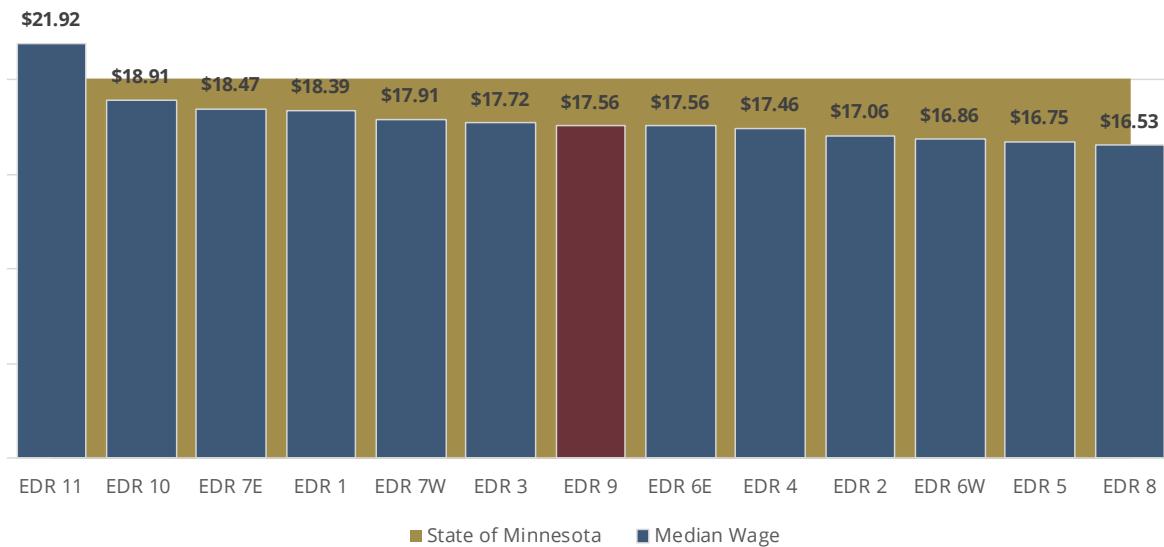
Darfur	86
Evan	57
La Salle	54
Odin	92
Ormsby	100
Darfur	108
Heidelberg	122

The majority if the landmass in Region Nine is rural in character. From scattered agriculture to the metropolitan center hugging the shores of the Minnesota River, Region Nine's geographical diversity leads to diversity in multiple facets effecting development including human capital, economic competitiveness, community resources, and foundational assets. While data offers insights, it is important to remember that as a member of Greater Minnesota, Region Nine has tactically positioned ability to build upon its regional uniqueness to build even healthier and more resilient communities which in return better serve the needs of the people who call Region Nine their home.

For more information concerning regional demographics please refer to Appendix II.



Median Hourly Wage by Economic Development Region



The region remains competitive in terms of economic competitiveness with a median wage competitively priced amongst other economic development regions, high levels of educational attainment, and ample job openings.

The U.S. Economic Development Administration assesses unemployment numbers and income levels to determine whether a county, city, or census tract is experiencing economic distress. Per capita personal income measures the average income earned per person in a given area in a specified year, while median household income reflects the aggregate income divided by total households as displayed in the table below. Region Nine continues to remain below the national average in relation to economic distress with low unemployment rates. The economic status of the region is further discussed in the subsequent cornerstones.

Region Nine Economic Distress

County	24 Month Unemployment	Medium Household Income	Per Capita Personal Income
Blue Earth	2.93	\$41,663	\$18,712
Brown	3.85	\$48,584	\$19,535
Faribault	4.17	\$38,421	\$17,193
Le Sueur	4.74	\$44,382	\$20,151
Martin	3.59	\$47,255	\$18,529
Nicollet	2.57	\$45,777	\$20,517
Sibley	3.67	\$43,192	\$18,004
Waseca	4.18	\$43,306	\$18,631
Watonwan	4.42	\$40,331	\$16,413
Nation	4.38	\$49,247	\$21,582

³ MNDEED Occupations Employment Statistics (OES) Wage Data, First Quarter 2018

⁴ U.S. Bureau of Census, Labor Statistics, and Economic Analysis; Calculations generated by StatsAmerican, August 2018

The Cornerstones

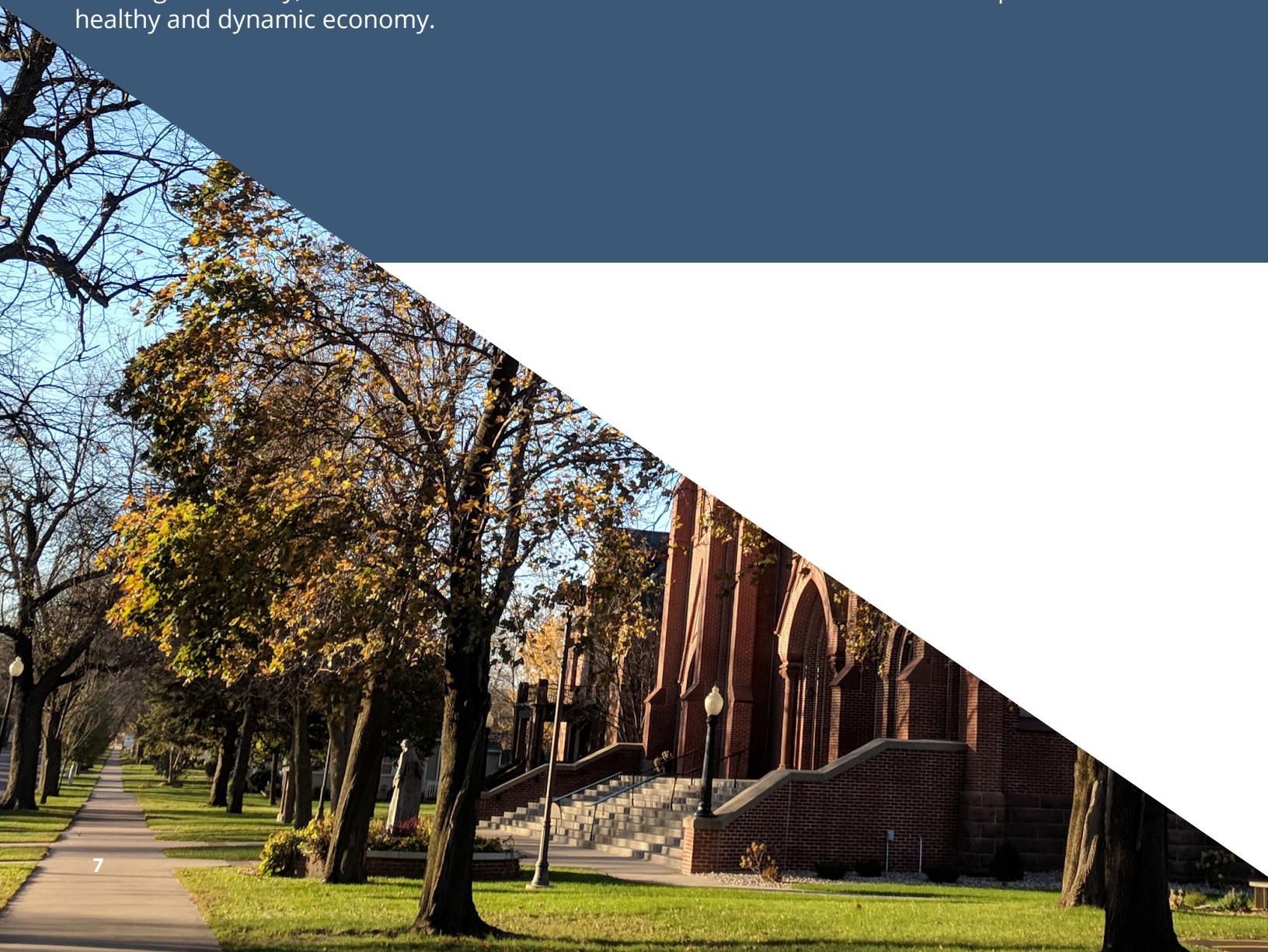
The four Cornerstones identified in the CEDS represent broad categories of the region's goals, strategies, and action steps originally developed for the 2016-2021 CEDS.

Human Capital, in the context of the CEDS, refers to monitoring and aligning the needs of employers and the workforce in an effort to retain and attract talent to the region. It includes developing the overall labor force and meeting regional needs with respect to educational attainment.

Economic Competitiveness encompasses efforts to support innovation, economic growth, job creation, and improved living standards throughout the region. It includes entrepreneurial activity and innovation and small business growth.

Community Resources refers to the maintenance of rural values, the heritage, and assets that support them. In the context of economic development, this cornerstone includes tourism, social capital, arts and culture, natural resources, and water quality.

Foundational assets encompass strategies that proactively and collaboratively address infrastructure needs in the region. Broadband access, transportation, active transportation, housing availability, and water and wastewater infrastructure are all critical components to a healthy and dynamic economy.



Economic Competitiveness

Entrepreneurship and Innovation

South Central Minnesota communities must embrace and encourage innovation, calculated risk-taking, and foster entrepreneurship to compete effectively in the global economy. As of October 2017, the state of Minnesota ranked sixteenth in Startup Activity (new venture creation), first in Main Street Entrepreneurship (established small business activity), and ninth in Growth Entrepreneurship (entrepreneurial business growth) among the twenty-five largest states when using the Kauffman index of entrepreneurial activity. Minnesota's entrepreneurial community is experiencing a slight increase in entrepreneurial growth. Following a fifteen year low in 2014 the percent of the adult population in Minnesota who became entrepreneurs in 2016 had increased from 0.17% (2014) to 0.28%. Startup density, however, has gradually declined since the late 1970s and has remained around 64 startup firms per 1,000 firms. Prior to the 2008 recession this number was 93.3.^{5,6}

Small Business Growth

Small businesses located in rural areas have limited access to capital compared to larger businesses. In order to grow and expand, small rural businesses must have access to more public and private funding opportunities. Approximately 71.1% of businesses in Region Nine have less than ten employees (compared to 71.4% statewide). Research shows that as much as 80% of job growth in a community comes from existing businesses.

The rate of startup growth in Minnesota is trending upwards after reaching a thirty year low in 2011. The most recent data indicates that startup growth was 79.51%, which suggests that startups as a cohort have grown nearly 80% five years after founding, measured by change in employment. However, the share of scale-ups in Minnesota have decreased steadily since the 2008 recession with the current rate at 1.46%, which represents the percentage of firms that started small but grew to employ 50 people or more by their tenth year of operation.⁷



⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, Business Dynamics Statistics, <https://www.census.gov/ces/dataproducts/bds/>

⁶ The Kauffman Index, <https://www.kauffman.org/kauffman-index>

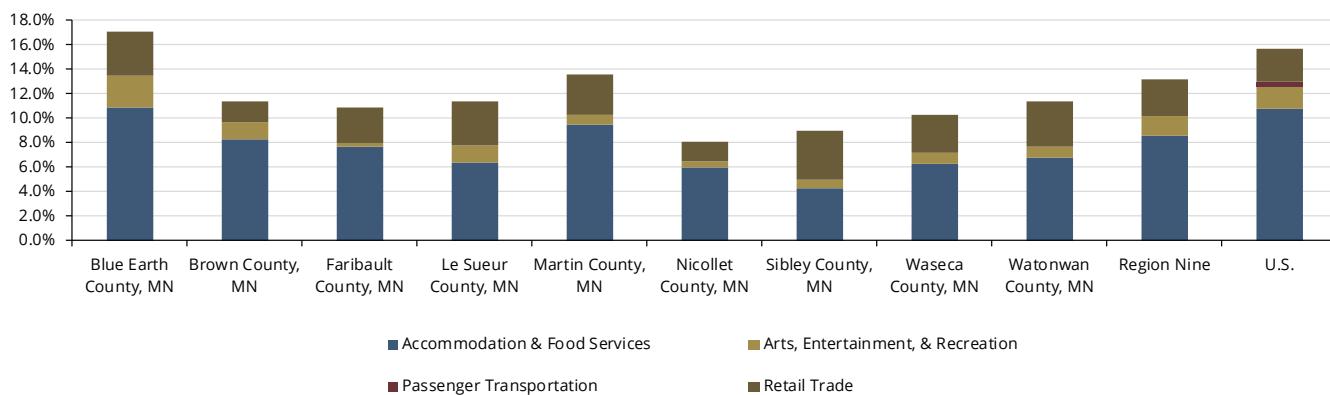
⁷ The Kauffman Index, <https://www.kauffman.org/kauffman-index>

Community Resources

Tourism

In 1998, travel and tourism represented 14% of total employment in Region Nine, and this number remains the same in 2016. In 2016, Blue Earth County had the largest percent of total travel and tourism employment (17.1%) and Nicollet County had the smallest (8.1%). Jobs in industries that include travel and tourism within the region indicate that retail trade shrank from 2,936 to 2,841 jobs between 1998 and 2016, a 3.2% decrease. However, jobs in arts, entertainment, and recreation grew from 1,052 to 1,499 jobs, a 42.5% increase, during the same period.

Percent of Total Private Employment in Industries that Include Travel & Tourism, 2016



With respect to wages, the highest wages are found in retail trade where the average annual wages in 2017 dollars were \$16,526, followed by accommodation and food services (\$13,684) and arts, entertainment, and recreation (\$12,433). 2016 figures indicate that the highest regional employment is in accommodation and food services (6.8% of total employment) followed by retail trade (2.4%) and arts, entertainment, and recreation (0.9%).⁸

Social Capital

Local residents must encourage and foster new local leadership skills as well as promote and attend civic engagement opportunities in order to become resilient against future challenges. Results from RNDC's CEDS survey indicates approximately 70% of survey participants that either live and/ or work in the Region Nine area currently believe that the development of community leaders in the region is average, below average or needs improvement.

Historically, voters in Minnesota and in Region Nine have far exceeded national averages with respect to participation in elections. Figures from the Secretary of State's office indicate that voter participation in the 2018 midterm elections far exceeded the numbers from four years earlier, which suggests that participation is trending upwards.

Arts & Culture

Arts and local culture contribute to the vibrancy of local economies and the quality of life experienced by local residents. The arts and entertainment sector experienced a drop in employment following the most recent recession. Employment in the arts, entertainment, and recreation sector represents 0.9% of the total employment in Region Nine in 2016. However, wages are significantly below the state average of \$33,126. Average wages within Region Nine range from \$17,260 in Nicollet County (highest in Region Nine) to \$10,599 in Brown County (lowest in Region Nine). The national average is \$37,579.

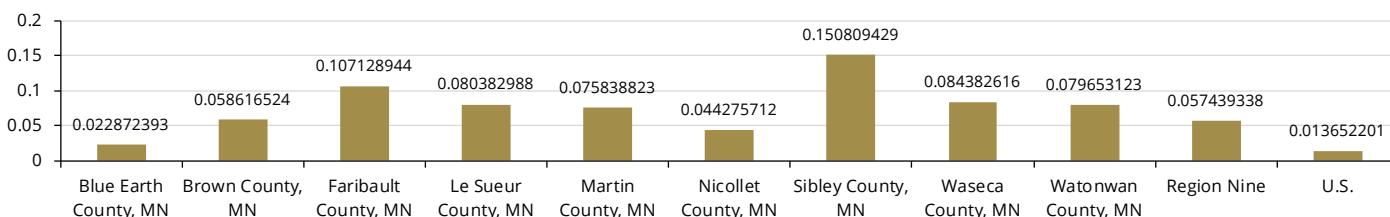
Employment numbers in arts and culture also vary within Region Nine. Three counties are at or near zero percent of total county employment in arts and culture (Faribault, Sibley, and Watonwan). The three highest are Blue Earth (1.3%), Brown (1.0%), and Le Sueur (0.9%), all below the state average of 1.5%.⁹

Natural Resources

The region offers an abundance of natural resources that are essential to the local, regional, and statewide economies. As the population of the state continues to increase, strain on natural resources is on the rise. Multiple threats include groundwater overuse and contamination, invasive species, and an overall decline of natural resources.

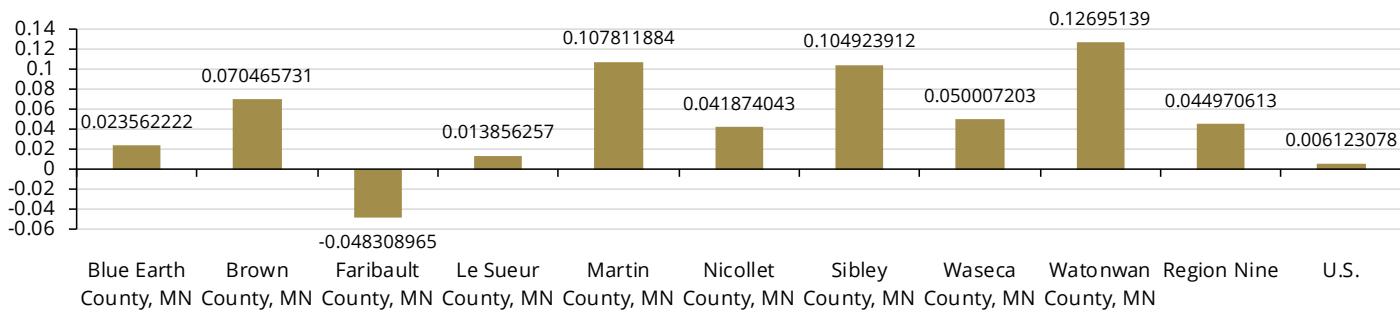
One of the region's largest natural resource is the productive soil. Farm jobs account for 5.7% of Region Nine's total employment which is significantly higher than the state (2.1%) and national (1.4%) figures. Sibley County has the largest percent of total farm employment (15.1%) followed by Faribault (10.7%) and Waseca (8.4%) counties. Blue Earth (2.3%), Nicollet (4.4%), and Brown (5.9%) have the smallest percentage of total farm employment.

Farm Jobs as a Percent of Total Employment, 2016



Watonwan County has the largest percent of total earnings from farm earnings (12.7%), while Faribault County had the smallest (-4.8%). Oilseed and grain farming (59.4%) constitute the region's largest type of farming, followed by other grains (18.4%).¹⁰ Oilseed and grain farming refers to the growing of oilseed and grain crops with annual life cycles. In Region Nine the primary oilseed is soybeans with approximately twenty percent oil content.

Farm Earnings as a Percent of Total Earnings, 2016



Water Quality

There is an increased demand for water resources related to growing populations, agricultural and manufacturing utilization and an increase in urbanization and recreational activities. For 2018, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) identified 97 additions in their draft impaired waters list that are in Region Nine of about 5,102 listings statewide. MPCA delisted one impaired body of water in 2018.¹¹

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2014. National Agricultural Statistics Service, Census of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

¹¹ MN Pollution Control Agency, Draft Impaired Waters List, 2018

Foundational Assets

Broadband Access

Access to affordable high-speed internet is imperative to remain competitive in today's global economy. In order to attract employers and to increase the area's employment, there needs to be a foundation of broadband infrastructure. Broadband infrastructure can be a catalyst in local economies and ultimately lead to regional economic growth. In Region Nine, 75.1% of all households are served at the state broadband goal of greater than 25Mbps download/3Mbps upload speeds in 2017. Overall, broadband connectivity throughout Region Nine ranks among the worst in the State of Minnesota. While some incorporated city centers have access to broadband speeds of at least 100Mbps/10Mbps upload, coverage throughout many townships is varied and inconsistent.¹²

Transportation

Region Nine is a part of MnDOT District 7, which includes 13 counties in both south central and southwestern Minnesota. This includes all of Region Nine's counties as well as Cottonwood, Jackson, Nobles and Rock counties. MnDOT District 7 directly supports 1,330 miles of state and federal highways, 146 miles of interstate, 484 bridges, 4,188 miles of county and state aid highways, 492 miles of rail line, 14 airports, and nine county and three city transit systems. District 7's fiscal year budget in 2016 is \$27.4 million or 7.1% of the total statewide budget. From 2016-2019, the average cost of a construction project is \$90.1 million with an average of 12 projects being employed between 2016-2019.¹³

Water & Wastewater Infrastructure

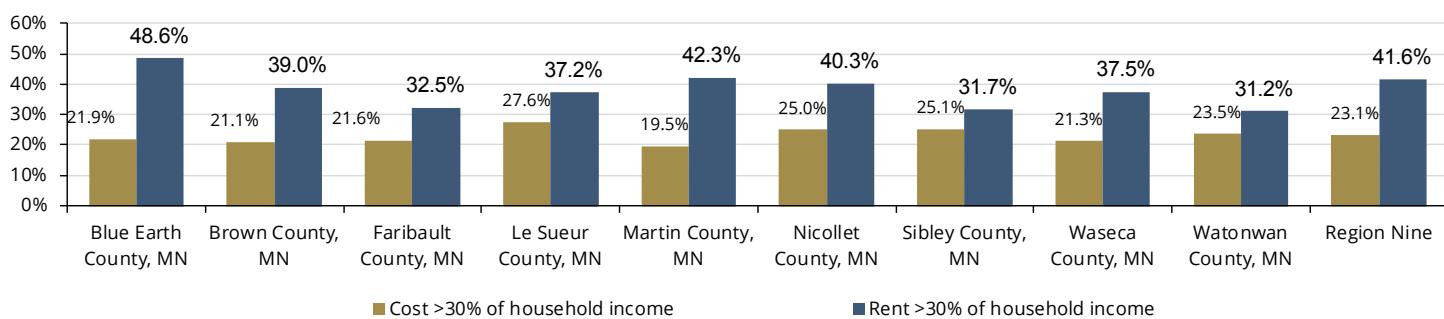
Water and wastewater infrastructure projects are difficult to fund especially with a small population base versus a larger community being able to spread the project costs across a larger population. According to the MPCA 2017 Clean Water Project Priority List (PPL) there are 17 cities in Region Nine that are listed. The project cost ranges from approximately \$80,000 to \$13.4 million. Of the \$1.5 billion of total estimated project costs in Minnesota, over \$89 million are in the Region Nine area.¹⁴



Housing Availability

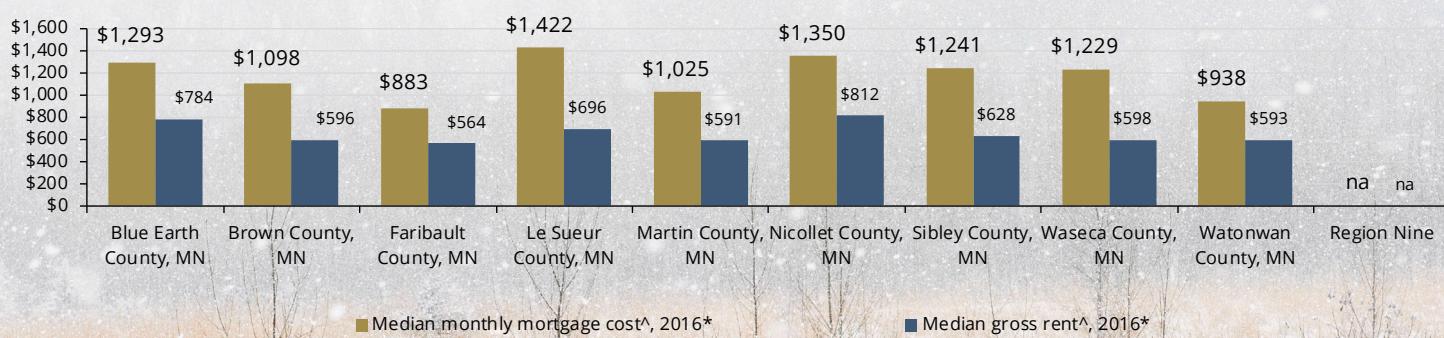
Using data from 2016¹⁵, Minnesota has a higher occupancy rate (89.6%) than the national average (87.8%), with only 1.1% of the housing stock available for rent, which is half of the national average. With respect to the percentage of household income that is spent on housing, however, Minnesota comes out favorably compared to the rest of the country at the aggregate level. Both mortgaged homes and rent fall below national averages when costs are assessed against household income. Whereas 24.4% of households in Minnesota spend more than 30% of their income on housing, the national average is 30.6%. Similarly, while 44.7% of renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing, the national average is 47.3%.

Housing Costs as a Percent of Household Income, 2016*



Le Sueur County can be used to illustrate troubling trends that are faced by many rural counties throughout the region. A larger percent of owners (27.6%) pay more than 30% of their household income on housing and the median monthly mortgage cost (\$1,422) is nearly the same as the national (\$1,491) and state (\$1,487) figures. A vacancy rate (13.5%) significantly higher than the state and the metro area keeps rental figures somewhat lower, but when assessing the percent of people by race and ethnicity who are below poverty levels the numbers are alarming¹⁶. Like other counties in the South Central region of Minnesota, Le Sueur County experiences extremely skewed numbers with respect to poverty and housing. Whereas 34.0% of Black or African Americans experience poverty in Minnesota (34.1% in Hennepin County), 89.6% of Black or African American residents live in poverty in Le Sueur County. Similarly, the numbers go up from 22.2% at the state level for Hispanic or Latino residents to 29.6% in Le Sueur County.¹⁷

Median Monthly Mortgage Costs and Gross Rent, 2016*



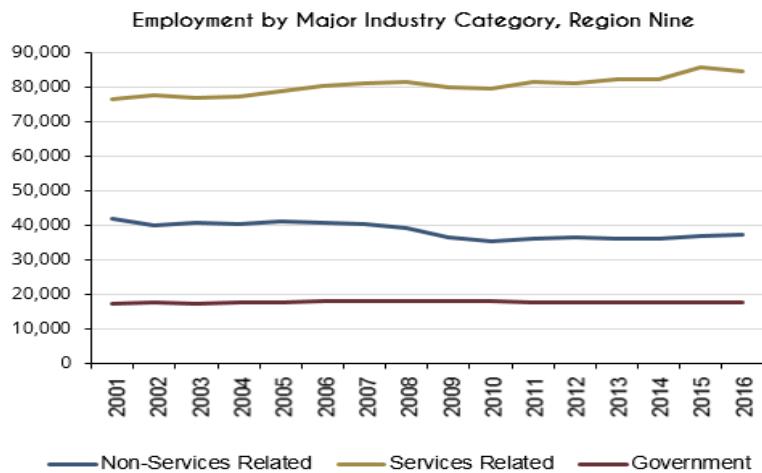
¹⁵ US Department of Commerce 2017, Census Bureau, American Community Service Office, Washington DC.

¹⁶ Census Bureau, American Community Service Office, Washington DC.

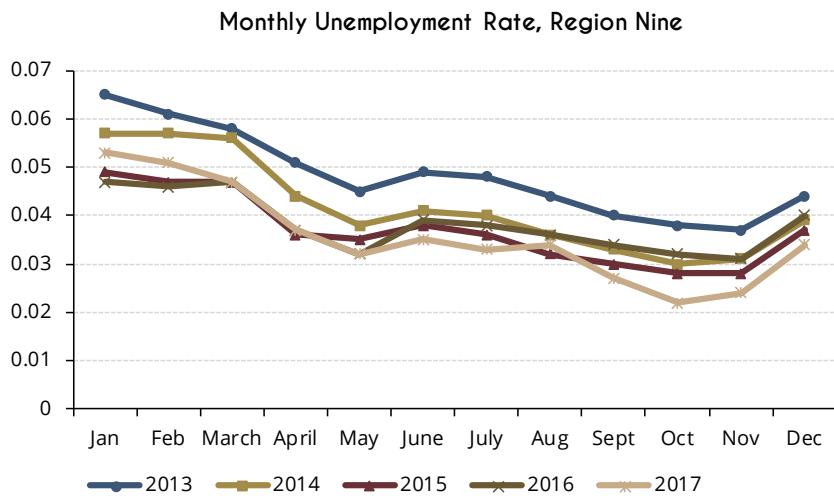
¹⁷ American Community Service Office, Washington DC.

Labor Force

The major employment industries in Region Nine are manufacturing, health care, retail trade, education, and food services. The largest growth in terms of absolute number of jobs has been in services with close to 1,700 new jobs over six years, followed by construction with 980 new jobs and agriculture with 850 new jobs. The manufacturing sector, which is particularly strong in this region, added close to 750 jobs but this represented a combination of gains in industries such as stone products, electronics, motors and generators despite significant losses in animal slaughtering, wireless communication equipment, and commercial printing.¹⁸



The unemployment rate for Region Nine has generally mirrored the state historically. However, recently, all nine counties in the region have enjoyed lower rates than the state. The Mankato-North Mankato area had an unemployment rate that fell below three percent in 2014 and has consistently remained between 3-3.5 percent into 2018. Sibley (5.5%) and Le Sueur (5.3%) counties had the highest unemployment rates in the region but were still less than the statewide rate of 5.6 percent. Consequently, the Region Nine has been inching towards full employment, which creates challenges for businesses seeking to hire additional workers.¹⁹



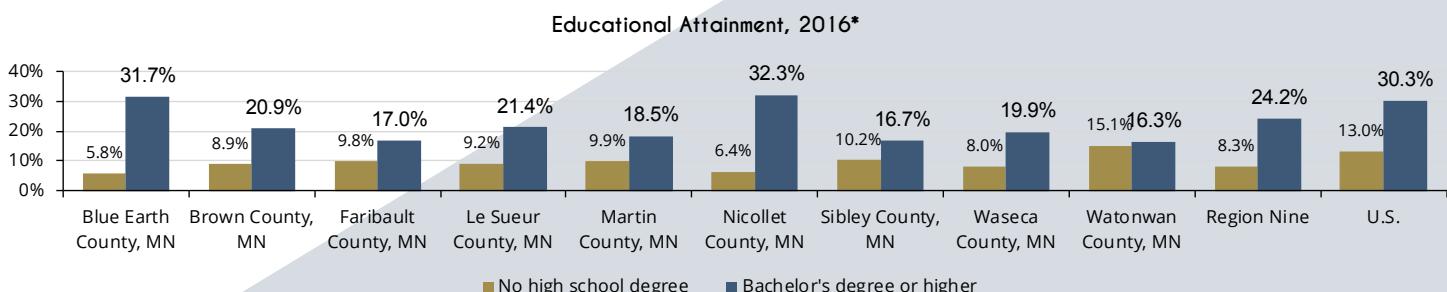
See Appendix III: Region Nine Labor Force Statistics for specific labor force data for each county in Region Nine.

SOC Title	Region Nine	State of MN		
	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Employment	Median Hourly Wage	Estimated Employment
Total, All Occupations	\$17.56	107,700	\$20.07	2,838,270
Architecture and Engineering	\$31.72	1,510	\$36.61	53,780
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	\$17.40	1,030	\$23.44	36,910
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	\$12.72	3,600	\$14.07	84,300
Business and Financial Operations	\$28.24	3,300	\$31.97	161,080
Community and Social Service	\$22.88	2,410	\$21.88	55,430
Computer and Mathematical	\$27.46	1,500	\$40.00	94,290
Construction and Extraction	\$24.37	4,930	\$27.10	99,900
Education, Training, and Library	\$21.65	8,140	\$23.65	163,850
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	\$14.94	260	\$15.45	3,540
Food Preparation and Serving Related	\$10.44	10,320	\$11.12	239,950
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	\$29.71	5,910	\$34.44	182,500
Healthcare Support	\$14.05	3,580	\$15.81	85,940
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	\$22.02	3,930	\$23.22	95,660
Legal Occupations	\$35.00	570	\$37.34	19,750
Life, Physical, and Social Service	\$25.09	780	\$31.23	26,220
Management Occupations	\$39.32	4,960	\$49.99	168,930
Office and Administrative Support	\$16.69	15,720	\$18.45	409,820
Personal Care and Service	\$12.56	6,230	\$12.12	139,210
Production	\$17.67	9,360	\$17.89	217,610
Protective Service	\$20.71	1,600	\$20.27	43,150
Sales and Related	\$12.07	10,360	\$14.10	277,720
Transportation and Material Moving	\$17.41	7,720	\$17.59	178,720

Educational Attainment

Education is vital when aligning worker skills with the needs of employers, which is critical to increasing productivity and growing the region's economy. Nicollet County has the highest percentage of people who have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher at 32.3%. Blue Earth County has the second highest with 31.7%, in comparison to the State of Minnesota which has 34.2%. Both the City of Mankato and the City of North Mankato have the highest percent of population that has completed a bachelor's degree or higher with 36.1% and 36.2% respectively.³ All nine counties have lower percentages of bachelor's degree graduates than the state average (34.2%). Besides Blue Earth County and Nicollet County (32.3%), the remaining seven counties are all below the national average of 24.2%.²¹

Collectively, all of Region Nine's counties have a slightly lower percentage of high school graduates than the state. Blue Earth County has the highest percentage of graduates at 94.2% and Watonwan has the lowest at 84.9%. Additionally, seven out of the nine counties in the region have a larger percentage of individuals who have an associate's degree comparatively to the state's 11%.²²



²⁰ DEED Occupational Employment Statistics, 2nd S 2017 (<https://apps.deed.state.mn.us/lmi/oes/Results.aspx>)

²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

²² U.S. Department of Commerce, 2017.

U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates



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Resolution: Region Nine Development Commission

Resolution: South Central Workforce Council | CEDS Committee

Region Nine Demographics

	Population									
	Blue Earth County	Brown County	Faribault County	Le Sueur County	Martin County	Nicollet County	Sibley County	Waseca County	Watonwan County	
Population 2011	63,370	25,926	14,690	27,754	20,821	32,471	15,219	19,154	11,190	
Population 2016	65,524	25,327	14,119	27,650	20,193	33,226	14,957	19,034	10,996	
Population % Change	3.40%	-2.31%	-3.89%	-0.37%	-3.02%	2.33%	-1.72%	-0.63%	-1.73%	
	Median Age									
	Blue Earth County	Brown County	Faribault County	Le Sueur County	Martin County	Nicollet County	Sibley County	Waseca County	Watonwan County	
Median Age 2011	29.7	43	45.7	39.5	45.1	33.1	40.2	39.2	41.5	
Median Age 2016	30.5	43.3	46.9	41.5	45.2	35.8	41.7	39.4	39.7	
Median Age % Change	2.69%	0.70%	2.63%	5.06%	0.22%	8.16%	3.73%	0.51%	-4.34%	
	Race									
	Blue Earth County	Brown County	Faribault County	Le Sueur County	Martin County	Nicollet County	Sibley County	Waseca County	Watonwan County	
Caucasian Population 2016	89.3%	94.3%	91.9%	91.8%	93.9%	90.1%	89.5%	89.4%	74.8%	
Caucasian Population 2011	91.2%	95.3%	93.2%	92.8%	94.9%	91.7%	91.0%	90.7%	76.8%	
Caucasian % Change	-2.08%	-1.05%	-1.39%	-1.08%	-1.05%	-1.74%	-1.65%	-1.43%	FALSE	
African American Population 2016	3.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.7%	0.2%	2.9%	0.5%	2.6%	0.6%	
African American Population 2011	2.4%	0.2%	0.5%	0.2%	0.4%	2.1%	0.5%	1.2%	0.3%	
African American Population % Change	33.33%	0.00%	-60.00%	250.00%	-50.00%	38.10%	0.00%	116.67%	100.00%	
American Indian and Alaska Native Population 2016	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.2%	
American Indian and Alaska Native Population 2011	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%	0.5%	0.3%	
American Indian and Alaska Native Population % Change	100%	0%	-66.67%	-25%	0%	-50.0%	200%	20.0%	-33.33%	
Asian Population 2016	2.0%	0.7%	0.3%	0.5%	0.8%	1.5%	0.6%	0.5%	1.2%	
Asian Population 2011	2.1%	0.6%	0.2%	0.6%	0.5%	1.2%	0.7%	0.5%	0.8%	
Asian Population % Change	-4.76%	16.67%	50.00%	-16.67%	60.00%	25.00%	-14.29%	0.00%	50.00%	
Hispanic or Latino Population 2016	3.1%	3.9%	6.2%	5.6%	4.0%	4.2%	8.3%	5.7%	22.6%	
Hispanic or Latino Population 2011	2.5%	3.2%	5.1%	5.2%	3.4%	3.6%	6.9%	4.9%	20.1%	
Hispanic or Latino Population % Change	24.00%	21.88%	21.57%	7.69%	17.65%	16.67%	20.29%	16.33%	12.44%	

Educational Attainment									
	Blue Earth County	Brown County	Faribault County	Le Sueur County	Martin County	Nicollet County	Sibley County	Waseca County	Watonwan County
Pop. Age 25+ w/ <9th Grade Education 2016	1.6%	4.0%	4.2%	2.8%	3.6%	3.0%	5.0%	3.0%	8.4%
Pop. Age 25+ w/ <9th Grade Education 2011	2.7%	5.3%	4.2%	3.4%	4.8%	2.7%	6.7%	2.8%	10.5%
Pop. Age 25+ w/ <9th Grade Education % Change	-40.74%	-24.53%	0.00%	-17.65%	-25.00%	11.11%	-25.37%	7.14%	-20.00%
Pop. Age 25+ 9th-12 Grade Education but No Diploma 2016	4.2%	4.9%	5.6%	6.5%	6.3%	3.4%	5.2%	5.0%	6.7%
Pop. Age 25+ 9th-12 Grade Education but No Diploma 2011	4.2%	5.3%	5.9%	6.2%	6.5%	4.4%	6.5%	5.7%	7.9%
Pop. Age 25+ 9th-12 Grade Education but No Diploma % Change	0.00%	-7.55%	-5.08%	4.84%	-3.08%	-22.73%	-20.00%	-12.28%	-15.19%
Pop. Age 25+ High School Graduate 2016	28.5%	37.8%	40.5%	36.0%	38.8%	27.1%	40.2%	36.2%	40.7%
Pop. Age 25+ High School Graduate 2011	28.4%	39.6%	39.9%	36.4%	37.1%	26.7%	41.0%	37.2%	37.2%
Pop. Age 25+ High School Graduate % Change	0.35%	-4.55%	1.50%	-1.10%	4.58%	1.50%	-1.95%	-2.69%	9.41%
Pop. Age 25+ Some College, No Degree 2016	22.3%	21.8%	21.0%	21.6%	20.8%	21.3%	21.1%	23.5%	18.1%
Pop. Age 25+ Some College, No Degree 2011	24.2%	22.4%	23.6%	23.3%	22.3%	22.8%	23.4%	26.7%	20.0%
Pop. Age 25+ Some College, No Degree % Change	-7.85%	-2.68%	-11.02%	-7.30%	-6.73%	-6.58%	-9.83%	-11.99%	-9.50%
Pop. Age 25+ Associate's Degree 2016	11.8%	10.7%	11.7%	11.8%	12.1%	12.9%	11.7%	12.3%	9.8%
Pop. Age 25+ Associate's Degree 2011	11.0%	8.9%	9.8%	9.4%	10.1%	10.2%	8.7%	8.5%	9.5%
Pop. Age 25+ Associate's Degree % Change	7.27%	20.22%	19.39%	25.53%	19.80%	26.47%	34.48%	44.71%	3.16%

Educational Attainment									
	Blue Earth County	Brown County	Faribault County	Le Sueur County	Martin County	Nicollet County	Sibley County	Waseca County	Watonwan County
Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's Degree 2016	21.3%	15.3%	12.7%	15.2%	14.3%	22.1%	12.7%	14.9%	12.7%
Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's Degree 2011	20.7%	13.1%	12.8%	15.4%	14.2%	22.8%	10.9%	14.0%	10.3%
Pop. Age 25+ Bachelor's Degree % Change	2.90%	16.79%	-0.78%	-1.30%	0.70%	-3.07%	16.51%	6.43%	23.30%
Pop. Age 25+ Graduate or Professional Degree 2016	10.4%	5.5%	4.2%	6.2%	4.1%	10.2%	4.0%	5.0%	3.6%
Pop. Age 25+ Graduate or Professional Degree 2011	8.9%	5.3%	3.8%	5.9%	4.9%	10.4%	2.8%	5.0%	4.6%
Pop. Age 25+ Graduate or Professional Degree % Change	10.40%	5.50%	4.20%	6.20%	4.10%	10.20%	4.00%	5.00%	3.60%

Region Nine Labor Force Statistics

Region Nine Labor Force Statistics											
		Blue Earth County	Brown County	Faribault County	Le Sueur County	Martin County	Nicollet County	Sibley County	Waseca County	Watonwan County	Total
Population 16 years and over	Total	5,401	20,428	11,413	21,623	16,281	26,623	11,718	15,159	8,563	137,209
	Labor Force Participation Rate	71.3%	68.1%	63.9%	71.1%	64.7%	72.0%	71.20%	65.90%	69.10%	68.6%
	Unemployment Rate	4.9%	2.7%	3.1%	4.3%	3.2%	3.5%	4.20%	4.70%	2.70%	3.7%
Age 16 to 19 years	Total	5,188	1,366	609	1,263	905	2,429	738	927	499	13,924
	Labor Force Participation Rate	55.1%	58.6%	53.9%	54.9%	62.8%	66.9%	55.3%	56.50%	60.30%	58.3%
	Unemployment Rate	18.4%	8.2%	4.6%	10.2%	13.9%	10.9%	11.80%	11.30%	8.00%	10.8%
Age 20 to 24 years	Total	10,883	1,692	651	1,489	1,040	2,697	736	1,069	636	20,893
	Labor Force Participation Rate	80.7%	89.4%	90.8%	86.3%	81.6%	77.7%	87.50%	81.40%	82.40%	84.2%
	Unemployment Rate	3.6%	4.7%	5.6%	8.6%	3.2%	6.9%	5.90%	10.20%	3.60%	5.8%
Age 25 to 29 years	Total	4,691	1,321	693	1,403	988	2,315	745	1,260	582	13,998
	Labor Force Participation Rate	92.9%	95.2%	82.7%	90.9%	83.7%	83.8%	91.7%	84.1%	91.80%	88.5%
	Unemployment Rate	3.7%	7.0%	4.2%	4.5%	4.2%	2.2%	7.5%	8.2%	2.10%	4.8%
Age 30 to 34 years	Total	4,281	1,447	706	1,640	1,109	2,259	825	1,401	735	14,403
	Labor Force Participation Rate	87.5%	93.2%	86.4%	92.0%	89.5%	92.2%	92.0%	79.9%	89.30%	89.1%
	Unemployment Rate	4.0%	3.6%	2.5%	4.9%	2.2%	2.6%	3.6%	8.8%	4.10%	4.0%
Age 35 to 44 years	Total	6,629	2,491	1,419	3,346	2,118	3,988	1,803	2,355	1,091	25,240
	Labor Force Participation Rate	89.3%	92.6%	89.6%	91.1%	90.2%	91.7%	93.50%	80.00%	87.20%	89.5%
	Unemployment rate	4.4%	0.7%	1.7%	2.7%	2.7%	2.8%	3.00%	2.10%	3.50%	2.6%
Age 45 to 54 years	Total	6,744	3,402	1,886	4,189	2,582	4,061	2,225	2,484	1,332	28,905
	Labor Force Participation Rate	89.0%	92.4%	86.6%	89.4%	89.5%	87.2%	89.00%	82.10%	92.60%	88.6%
	Unemployment Rate	3.9%	1.2%	2.6%	3.9%	1.2%	2.4%	4.10%	2.10%	1.50%	2.5%
Age 55 to 59 years	Total	3,726	1,885	1,242	2,220	1,743	2,172	1,198	1,446	883	16,515
	Labor Force Participation Rate	85.9%	84.6%	82.2%	86.8%	82.5%	85.1%	87.60%	86.40%	88.40%	85.5%
	Unemployment Rate	3.8%	1.1%	2.0%	3.8%	1.6%	2.1%	2.50%	2.80%	1.80%	2.4%
Age 60 to 64 years	Total	3,486	1,770	1,024	1,663	1,403	2,054	828	1,142	693	14,063
	Labor Force Participation Rate	66.9%	64.6%	64.5%	65.7%	62.7%	75.7%	73.10%	62.40%	73.20%	67.6%
	Unemployment Rate	3.3%	2.2%	2.6%	2.6%	6.5%	1.2%	3.60%	1.10%	1.20%	2.7%
Age 65 to 74 years	Total	4,421	2,403	1,557	2,506	2,078	2,563	1,320	1,599	1,007	19,454
	Labor Force Participation Rate	26.4%	26.4%	33.4%	25.6%	29.8%	26.5%	31.70%	28.60%	34.20%	29.2%
	Unemployment Rate	2.6%	1.1%	7.9%	2.7%	0.6%	0.3%	1.40%	2.00%	2.30%	2.3%
Age 75 years and over	Total	3,965	2,651	1,626	1,904	2,315	2,085	1,300	1,476	1,105	18,427
	Labor Force Participation Rate	4.0%	6.5%	5.2%	8.8%	5.9%	7.3%	8.50%	5.60%	8.10%	6.7%
	Unemployment Rate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	11.0%	0.0%	1.80%	1.20%	0.00%	1.6%
White alone	Total	50,080	19,942	11,182	20,914	15,983	25,191	11,416	14,177	7,936	176,821
	Labor Force Participation Rate	71.6%	68.0%	63.8%	71.0%	64.5%	72.5%	71.50%	67.30%	69.30%	68.8%
	Unemployment Rate	4.4%	2.4%	3.1%	4.2%	3.2%	2.4%	4.20%	4.90%	2.50%	3.5%
Black or African American alone	Total	1,545	37	15	144	31	667	48	411	35	2,933
	Labor Force Participation Rate	68.8%	13.5%	20.0%	63.2%	48.4%	58.3%	75.00%	52.30%	65.70%	51.7%
	Unemployment Rate	13.9	0.0%	0.0%	25.3%	0.0%	44.2%	2.80%	0.00%	34.80%	166.3%

	Blue Earth County	Brown County	Faribault County	Le Sueur County	Martin County	Nicollet County	Sibley County	Waseca County	Watonwan Cou
Total	207	34	11	68	15	52	8	119	46
Unemployment Rate	89.4%	58.8%	0.0%	75.0%	53.3%	57.7%	75.00%	6.70%	32.60%
Total	15.1%	0.0%	-	0.0%	37.5%	13.3%	0.00%	0.00%	13.30%
Unemployment Rate	58.5%	71.6%	43.6%	92.5%	92.5%	64.00%	30.90%	67.10%	75.00%
Total	7.9%	4.0%	0.0%	1.0%	0.9%	12.50%	0.00%	0.00%	3.50%
Unemployment Rate	100.0%	100.0%	-	0.0%	-	-	66.70%	-	-
Total	0.0%	0.0%	-	-	-	-	0.00%	-	-
Unemployment Rate	223	161	49	227	25	130	101	214	425
Total	76.7%	90.1%	79.6%	73.6%	64%	86.20%	84.20%	47.70%	67.80%
Unemployment Rate	7.6%	28.3%	23.1%	0.0%	0.00%	4.50%	2.40%	0.00%	4.20%
Total	844	98	117	162	107	158	74	156	45
Unemployment Rate	72.0%	65.3%	84.6%	81.5%	73.80%	67.70%	44.60%	52.60%	91.10%
Total	11.0%	3.1%	2.0%	9.1%	2.50%	0.90%	12.10%	0.00%	2.40%
Unemployment Rate	29,557	12,316	525	1,046	666	772	597	632	748
Total	86.5%	87.6%	64.8%	69.5%	73.60%	58.80%	81.10%	67.60%	88.00%
Unemployment Rate	3.9%	2.1%	7.1%	6.6%	3.30%	17.20%	8.70%	7.70%	3.80%
Total	7,724	4,113	2,492	4,966	3507	4265	2,901	3,387	1,895
Unemployment Rate	83.6%	84.2%	82.3%	84.8%	83.30%	79.60%	86.80%	74.60%	81.70%
Total	6.0%	2.7%	3.0%	6.7%	3.00%	4.30%	4.60%	5.30%	3.30%
Unemployment Rate	10,886	4,629	2,628	5,175	3797	6201	2,734	4,054	1,709
Total	87.0%	90.0%	85.4%	89.8%	83.20%	90.00%	90.20%	80.60%	92.70%
Unemployment Rate	3.6%	0.9%	2.1%	2.2%	3.20%	1.70%	2.60%	3.10%	1.50%
Total	9,652	3,037	1,325	3,274	1973	5611	1,392	2,015	964
Unemployment Rate	90.5%	91.0%	85.4%	91.9%	90.6%	92.60%	93.00%	91.40%	90.40%
Total	1.7%	3.0%	0.7%	1.0%	0.70%	0.40%	2.70%	2.30%	1.30%

Action Plan

Economic Competitiveness Action Plan

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Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Encourage partnership between local public and private sectors for incentives and programs for area businesses, such as tax increment financing, tax abatement, or DEED's Business Development Public Infrastructure program to attract entrepreneurs to the region and align the recruited entrepreneurs with the local employment needs.	2.28	City of St. James uses tax increment financing and abatement on an as needed basis and we intend to pursue business development public infrastructure for an industrial park expansion Tax abatement and TIF Business visits	City of St. James, EDA Cities of Waseca, New Richland, Janesville, & Waldorf, Waseca County, SROC, & private sector Ongoing City of Fairmont, Fairmont Area Chamber		
Directly connect higher education institutions, including Minnesota State University, Mankato, South Central College, Bethany Lutheran College, Rasmussen College, Gustavus Adolphus College and Martin Luther College directly to major employers for potential research and development collaborations.	2.34	Ag research that now is nearing a new development in biofuels Martin County manufacturers group MSU Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and SMIF student project funding	City of Waseca, Southern Research Outreach Center Ongoing City of Fairmont, Fairmont Economic Development Authority		Connections made and products/processes brought to market Actual collaborations
Partner with the Small Business Development Center, South Central MN S.C.O.R.E., Regional Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation to help them expand and funnel their resources into the most rural areas in south central Minnesota.	2.32	Center for Small Towns Morris Working to start a SCORE chapter in Sibley County Watonwan County has contracted with RCEF SBDC/SCORE services Establish additional SBDC satellite service centers in the region	Meeting - Feb 2017 City of St. James, Watonwan County City of Waseca, MSU, BEST of Waseca County Ongoing Economic developers, chambers, RNDC		When we have a viable SCORE network in the county Number of businesses and entrepreneurs assisted and successful areas Services made more accessible in rural areas
Minnesota Initiative Foundation		Small Business Development Center partnership Minnesota Agriculture and Rural Leadership Program Project 1590 - Fairmont from the Ground Up SCORE partnership with USDA Farm Service Agencies to mentor ag start-ups	Ongoing Fairmont Economic Development Authority, SBDC UMN Extension City of Fairmont, Martin County		Contact Hours
Partner and support legislation, utilizing statewide support, to expand the Small Business Development Center, South Central MN S.C.O.R.E., Regional Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation and Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation's capacity to build out their network and increase resources for rural subject matter experts.	2.32	Bills being introduced to fund the MN SBDC Network - \$500,000; also separate bill to fund SBDC - South Central & Regional Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation - \$360,000 per fiscal year	Current legislative session	Authored by Reps. Rod Hamilton & Tama Theis; assistance requested from Sen. Rich Draheim and others on Senate side; Second bill sponsored by Rep. Bob Gunther	Successful appropriation to build sustainable capacity

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Develop and promote a regional marketing strategy with a clear and concise message to attract potential new residents by leveraging regional resources, such as the University of Minnesota Extension, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation, GreenSeam, RNDC and other regional partners.	2.27	Creation of City Center Marketing Brochure		SC MN SCORE	
	Fairmont Area Life	Ongoing	City of Fairmont, Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce, Fairmont EDA	Newcomers; analytics	
	Madelia marketing and communications plan	Completion by June 2018	City of Madelia, Federal EDA, DEED, RNDC	New residents; event attendance and outreach analytics	
	Grow a Farmer Fund	Ongoing	RTTC, SMIF and over 250 donors	Number of investments	
	SBDC consulting	Ongoing	Banks, Region Nine, SMIF, SBDC, local funders	Create awareness of capital opportunities and mentor through the processes	
	Constant contact with RNDC, SMIF, DEED, etc.	Ongoing			
Increase and diversify access to capital to boost entrepreneurship and innovation.	2.41				
Incentivize local employers with the research and development tax credit to encourage and increase research and development in the region.	2.22				
Continue to grow and support businesses with global connections through e-commerce.	2.12	At least one SBDC consultant to achieve Certified Global Business Professional	2017-2018	SBDC, MN Trade Office, SBA, Export-Import Bank of the U.S., commercial service	Capacity for international trade assistance added to SBDC toolbox
	1 Million Cups - National Kaufman Foundation	Ongoing	DEED, SCORE		
	RS Fiber - Extension STEAM program is working to incorporate these programs into the 4-H programs and schools	Ongoing	Extension, Sibley County	When program is up and running, kids enrolled based on number of participants	
	BEST is working with a building owner to create a shared space environment		City of Waseca, BEST of Waseca County & private sector	Number of participants and launched/expanded businesses	
	SC MN SCORE		MSU, CIE, SBDC, SCORE 0710		
	Fairmont Business Incubator Building	Ongoing	City of Fairmont		
	Mankato Makerspace				
	SROC & Agricultural Utilization Research Institute conduct research to develop and improve usage and processing of agricultural products		City of Waseca, SROC & Agricultural Utilization Research Institution	Products and processes brought to the market	
	Progress research and development projects into marketable technology production that will ultimately increase STEM industries that will spur economic development throughout the region.	2.27	Requiring STEM courses as a general to graduate high school	Ongoing	City of Fairmont, Fairmont Community Education and Recreation, Fairmont Schools
	MedTech Connect		Completed September 2018	Federal EDA, Minnesota Medical Manufacturing Partnership, RNDC	Development of strategies that will help the region attract manufacturing businesses and cluster industries
	Explore incentives and expand renewable energy development.	2.24	Improved process to create biofuels	City of Waseca, SROC, Guardian Energy	
	Support local grocers in rural communities to improve access to healthy and sustainable foods.	2.13			

Community Resources Action Plan

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
		FEAST! Local Food Network - FEAST! Event	December each year	RTTC, MDA, Mayo, McKnight Foundation, SMIF, RNDC - primary partners	Number of attendees
		Sibley County Business Expo	April 20, 2017	Sibley County	Number of participants
Promote and highlight local businesses and their locally produced products.	2.51	Chamber directory Creation of business list including NAICS/SIC codes	Ongoing	City of St. James Waseca EDA, BEST of Waseca County	Completeness of the list and the effectiveness of dissemination
		Promote SBDC client success stories through social media, newsletters, press releases, ribbon cuttings	Ongoing	SBDC	Increased visibility, new clients
Conserve valuable natural resources and protect outdoor heritage through education, preservation and conservation efforts.	2.45	Social media marketing, newsletters, e-news, publicity, business visits	Ongoing	Fairmont Area Chamber, Fairmont EDA, RNDC	
		Soil and Water Conservation District Agri-business and ties with Rural Water Associations	Ongoing	Fairmont Area Chamber, Fairmont EDA	
		Rural Entrepreneurial Venture We have a lot of volunteers working on many projects at this time	Launch Jan. 2018	Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, SMIF, RNDC City of St. James	Increased prosperity
Build upon the strong foundation of community participation and support found in local communities.	2.58	BEST bring together representatives from Waseca County, cities, and the private sector for collaborative efforts.	Monthly	City of Waseca, BEST of Waseca County Bureau 14	
		Madelia Strong Multicultural Fiesta event in St. James	Annual	City of Madelia City of St. James	
		Farmamerica Ag Tours - "Martin County Ag from beginning to end"	First tour July 2018	City of Waseca Visit Fairmont, local ag. producers, City of Fairmont	Attendance, sales, etc.
Promote agricultural-based tourism and pursue potential for tourism development surrounding the agriculture sector and local foods.	2.42	Entrepreneur Assistance Program - produced local foods needs assessment of south central growers and coordinated a peer to peer network of local growers	Completed July 2017	SMIF, RNDC	Number of local growers connected to within region
		Agriculture Resilience Plan	Kickoff Fall 2017	MDA, MSU-M, SCC, RNDC	Completion of planning process and implementation of resulting plan strategies
Promote adherence to the Federal Clean Water Act standards that presume a water body should sustain healthy aquatic life, recreation and additional uses, such as drinking water, industry and agricultural uses.	2.40	Soil and Water Conservation District			

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Support and promote regional water quality plans, projects and initiatives.	2.43	<p>Soil and Water Conservation District - One Watershed One Plan</p> <p>Galter Lake - storm retention basin planned</p> <p>Agribusiness and ties with Rural Water Associations</p> <p>Assisted Blue Earth County's Clear Lakes Project</p>	TBD Ongoing Completed June 2017	<p>City of Waseca</p> <p>City of Fairmont, Fairmont Area Chamber</p> <p>Blue Earth County, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, RNDCC</p>	Increased awareness of water quality concerns in Blue Earth County
Support local community leadership programs and networking groups.	2.64	<p>Martin County Area Leadership</p> <p>CEO Peer Network</p> <p>Leading Sibley Together - leadership program is just finishing up the first year of activity</p> <p>Leadership Class</p> <p>Leadership Martin County</p>	Ongoing Ongoing Every other year September to May 2018	<p>SMIF</p> <p>Sibley County</p> <p>Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Waseca</p> <p>City of Fairmont, Fairmont Chamber, Fairmont EDA, Martin County EDA</p>	<p>Increased sales</p> <p>Participant surveys</p> <p>Participant numbers & leadership roles taken</p>
Increase mentorship opportunities for younger generations to assume future community leadership positions.	2.48	Area Career Exploration, Junior Achievement		City of St. James, Fairmont Chamber, partners	
Develop, implement and consistently enforce land use policies that balance economic competitiveness and resilience with human well-being and natural amenities preservation.	2.20	New comprehensive plan	2019	City of St. James, St. James Planning Commission	
Reuse vacant storefronts, warehouses, etc. to host new and emerging artists, galleries and experimental spaces.	2.14	Agribusiness committee		City of Fairmont, Fairmont Chamber and partners	
Promote intergovernmental cooperation and partnerships related to water quality plans, projects and initiatives.	2.49	Polos Building- would like to demolish substandard building and create new chamber building with artists displays up front		City of St. James, St. James Chamber, EDA	
Promote nature-based tourism and pursue potential for development of new hospitality and nature access ventures.	2.26	The Waseca Art Center renovated a building into a gallery and meeting space	Completed	City of Waseca, Arts Council	
Capitalize on current tourism destinations and future development of new destinations.	2.37	Develop concept to promote wildlife watching in area parks & lakes	2017-2018	City of Waseca, Discover Waseca Tourism	
		Hobo Trail, Cedar Creek Park, Expanded trail System	Ongoing	City of Fairmont, trails committee	Completed trail system that can be marketed
		CVB is building visitor kiosk	May 2017	City of St. James, CVB	
		Discover Waseca Tourism promotes the area and works with events to improve the events and reach more people		City of Waseca, Discover Waseca Tourism	Attendance, lodging tax, etc.
		Visit Fairmont marketing campaign	Ongoing	City of Fairmont, Visit Fairmont, area attractions	Increase in visitor traffic

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Actively engage the public in natural resource planning to achieve greater community awareness and support of reducing overall carbon footprints.	2.05	Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan - to assess south central Minnesota's vulnerability to climate change	Completed June 2017	RNDC, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	The increased awareness and number of strategies implemented as a result of regional planning process
Promote compact and infill development of cities and urban areas that include mixed commercial and mixed residential zoning to reduce the number of vehicles traveled and reduce costs associated with heating and cooling, saving communities and businesses on land-use expenses.	1.86	The City of Waseca identified build-able, vacant lots and will provide tax abatement and waive utility connection fees for new homes built on these lots	City of Waseca and possibly Waseca County		Number of homes built
Enhance soil and water management by increasing conservation practices, retaining top soil and agriculture productivity during extreme rain, drought and freezing events.	2.42				
Increase coordinated regional promotion of all cultural and arts related events for greater reach and community support of these sectors.	1.95	Artplace community development initiative through Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership	3 years 2016-2019	City of St. James, Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership	
Utilize innovative civic engagement techniques to draw perspectives from youth and people from long distances to increase engagement and input.	2.17	Visit Fairmont social media channels	Ongoing	City of Fairmont, Visit Fairmont, Blandin, Martin County, Fairmont Chamber	Engagement and analytics
Work with local chambers of commerce and businesses to create downtown festivals and fairs in communities where downtowns benefit from an influx of pedestrians and customers.	2.15	Railroad Days Jammin' in June Glow, Interlaken Heritage Days (IHD Committee)	City of St. James City of Waseca, private sector City of Fairmont, Fairmont Chamber		Attendance and participation improvement Business Feedback/Surveys
Create and promote "unique niches" through placemaking, comprehensive planning or capital improvement planning to map out a community brand and vision in scalable increments for the next three, five and ten years.	2.14	The City of Waseca identified build-able, vacant lots and will provide tax abatement and waive utility connection fees for new homes built on these lots	City of Waseca and possibly Waseca County		Number of homes built
The City of Madelia is currently undergoing a full comprehensive planning process		Completed by January 2018	RNDC, City of Madelia, Blandin Foundation	Future projects and activities implemented that connects back to the comprehensive plan	

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Increase the capacity of commuter bus lines, land-to-air shuttles, taxi services and ridesharing to expand south central's tourism from the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The connections could link to state parks, historical destinations and downtowns, e.g. Mankato, Henderson, New Ulm as well as lakes, rivers and regional parks and trails.	2.09	Prairie Lakes - Martin - Faribault, Land to Air Express			
Retrofit and convert energy inefficient building's waste into Combined Heat and Power buildings to deliver hot water, heat and electric generation uses.	1.93				
Partner with area universities, technical colleges and school districts to promote art programs, art walks and art-related events and courses in rural communities.	2.02	Tink Larson Field grandstand project to rebuild the grandstand destroyed by arson	City of Waseca, Waseca School, BEST of Waseca	Contributions raised	
Attract and organize both amateur and professional athletics to draw people to park systems or town centers.	1.71	Designing or co-designing disc golf courses to offer additional recreational opportunities for area residents, as well as a reason for disc golfers from other areas to visit said communities	Ongoing Map-formation, Disc Golf Association in California (www.discgolf.com)	10 additional courses have been installed in Southwest/West-Central Minnesota. There are numerous communities across Region Nine that could benefit from similar activities	
Capitalize on commuters traveling to Rochester's Destination Medical Center and Minneapolis-St. Paul by expanding access to businesses and promoting tourist destinations along major transportation routes, e.g. U.S. Highway 169 and Interstate 90.	1.93	Hotel feasibility study	Current City of Waseca, Waseca EDA	Getting an accurate determination of feasibility & building a hotel if feasible.	
Increase voter turnout in all nine counties from 69.6 percent to 74.7 percent as reported from the 2016 general election, to compare with average voter turnout statewide.	2.14				
Become an arts-friendly community.	1.68				
Establish a grant or a revolving loan fund opportunity for arts-centered commerce.	1.63				
Create a traveling art showcase that promotes art education and area artists, including theater arts, photography and digital art.	1.51				

Foundational Assets Action Plan

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Increase the development of workforce housing.		Bring SW MN Housing Partnership East			
		Housing Committee and Housing Assessment	2017	Sibley County	Assessment tools
	2.46	Tax abatement and waiver of utility connection fees	Through 2018	City of Waseca	Units built
		Whitetail Ridge	2017-2020	City of Fairmont and Fairmont Area Schools	Lots purchased by people who currently own a home in Martin County versus those that do not
Encourage state and local units of government to support and pursue options that increase the availability of transportation funding.	2.33	Annual transportation planning assistance contract - RNDCC staff provides technical support for transportation issues affecting the nine counties	Completed June 2017; began new contract July 2017	MnDOT, RNDCC	Increase the region's transportation facilities, options and resources in south central Minnesota
Leverage federal program dollars, CAF II, and ARRA to meet national speed goals of 10/1 as Phase I to implement high-speed internet access across the nine counties, and provide scalable infrastructure that can provide speeds in excess of 1:1 gig symmetrical speeds.	2.45				
Develop appropriate water and wastewater infrastructure to support existing and new business and housing developments.	2.32	Elm Ave. project and sewer lining project	2017-2018	City of Waseca, MnDOT	
Create and leverage public and private partnerships, establish co-operatives, and work with all wireline providers in the region to improve access to high-speed internet.	2.52				
Maintain and/or promote major transportation routes that connect regional economic hubs to stimulate economic development.	2.48				
Provide more coordinated housing planning for communities on a local and regional scale.	2.29				
Work with all communities within the region to meet the Minnesota Governor's Broadband Task Force 2016 annual report which includes recommendations for the 2017 legislative season (25Mbps download/3Mbps upload statewide by 2022; 100/20 by 2026).	2.43				

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Participate in regional highway corridor coalitions.	2.46	Highway 14 Partnership		City of Waseca and Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce	
Partner with MnDOT to help identify potential freight enhancement projects that have good potential for a positive return on investment.	2.29				
Develop plans with local partners and help connect them with funding sources that will develop, expand and maintain active transportation networks.	2.33	Coordination and completion of Gaylord's Safe Routes to School Plan Coordination and completion of Springfield's Safe Routes to School Plan Coordination and completion of Lake Crystal's Safe Routes to School Plan Walkability assessment	Completed June 2017	MnDOT, City of Gaylord, City of Springfield, City of Lake Crystal, RNDC	Increase the number of students walking to and from school.
Collect and share best management practices around housing projects, policies and financing.	2.32		Completed June 2017	Blue Earth SHIP, RNDC	Increase number of residents walking
Encourage development of transitional and life-cycle housing in rural communities.	2.23				
Identify important freight routes which serve a supplementary role to the Minnesota trunk highway system to promote the safe and efficient movement of goods.	2.23				
Facilitate and educate local communities with best practices that illustrate funding options to update outdated and undersized systems.	2.22				
Work with local legislators and the State Office of Broadband Development to provide support for more funding to be apportioned to the state to implement broadband infrastructure and planning in rural Minnesota.	2.52				
Promote the benefits of high-speed internet in rural Minnesota, show return on investment and gather public input and/or conduct a community broadband feasibility study.	2.31				

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Partner with representatives of the Governor's Broadband Task Force to help reinforce the recommendations made to the state and ensure that the challenges of businesses, residents, and community anchor institutions across Region Nine are well represented.	2.32				
Work with the counties of: Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan and the Blandin Foundation to ensure that each of the nine counties in Region Nine become members in the Blandin Broadband Cohort.	2.06				
Promote the availability and benefits of trail systems to increase awareness and support for increased active living in Region Nine communities.	2.31	City of Waseca Trails		City of Waseca, Discover Waseca Tourism, Waseca and Freeborn Counties	
Coordinate transit providers across the region to assist in efficiently connecting people to jobs and services.	2.33	Human Services Transit Coordination Plan	Completed June 2017	RNDC, MnDOT, area transit providers, area transit users	Increased coordination and ridership of area transit services
Continue partnering with the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership to promote active living in communities.	2.36				
Work with Office of Broadband Development and providers to help update the Connect Minnesota service maps in the nine counties in Region Nine to include all providers' data and ensure that the maps are as accurate as possible.	2.26				
Closely align policy decisions and funding availability with the supply and demand of transit services in the region.	2.17				
Encourage the development of a variety of housing types for all, including: seniors, low-income, newcomers and the workforce.	2.58			SMIF	

Human Capital Action Plan

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Enhance and capitalize on the quality of life amenities to retain the talent in the region.	2.70	Discover St. James Website Fairmont Area Life - working to attract and retain those between the ages of 30-49 to our area	May 2017 Ongoing	City of St. James, EDA, Chamber, CVB Fairmont Economic Development Authority, Fairmont Area Chamber of Commerce; Visit Fairmont; Fairmont Photo Press; US Bank, City of Fairmont	Project completion Tracking newcomers; analytics
		Martin County Summer Internship Program - brings college students back to the county to work in summer internships	Annually	Martin County employers, MN Valley Action Council, South Central Workforce, Martin County commissioners	Number of internships. Number of intern evaluations completed by employers, county provides funding
		Brain Gain Project	EDA	Contacts Made, Returnees	
		Encore Entrepreneurship event; ongoing SBDC consulting	2017 (tentative)	SBA, SBDC	Number of participants; hours of consulting provided, client milestones achieved
		Start Up Saturday Events		SMIF, SBDC; SCORE 0710	Participant Feedback - Number of SCORE Mentees
		Student forgiveness in skilled professions		Faribault County Development Corporation	
				MN DEED-Job Service Employers, South Central Workforce	Number of incumbent workers trained
		The workforce council has funding available for incumbent worker training; however, MN DEED is still working on policies; Two small projects conducted this past year	Ongoing	MN DEED-Job Service Employers, South Central Workforce	
		Ongoing SBDC trainings and consulting	Ongoing	SMIF, SCORE, SBA, MSU Continuing Education, Dept of Revenue, PTAC, SBDC	Number of participants, hours of consulting, client milestones achieved
		Partnership with veterans		SCORE	
		MN DEED Business Services - outreach to employers, provides information on recruiting & retaining employees, connects businesses to programs and services/incentives available	Ongoing	MN DEED - Job Service Employers, South Central Workforce	Number of businesses served
		MN DEED Business Services - outreach to employers, provides information on recruiting & retaining employees, connects businesses to programs and services/incentives available	Ongoing	MN DEED - Job Service Employers, South Central Workforce	Number of businesses served
		Training for welders		Martin County Schools	
		Ongoing SBDC trainings	Ongoing	SMIF, SCORE, SBA, MSU Continuing Education, Dept of Revenue, PTAC, SBDC	Number of participants, hours of consulting, client milestones achieved
		Junior Achievement and Farm America	Ongoing	MSUM, SCC, Riverland, Maple River, St. Peter, Mankato, GreenSeam	Number of participants
		Trades classes in Fairmont schools, Aviation program, Talent Initiative		Greater Mankato Growth	Number of connections made between business and new, talented workers
		Presentation College - Mayo Health System Nursing Training		City of Fairmont	
		MSU Center for Invitational Entrepreneurship and SCC Center for Business and Industry			
		Greater collaboration and coordination of programs amongst higher education institutions and major regional employers.	2.30		

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Connect and support communities with high concentration of minority populations to inclusion opportunities (e.g. Gaylord, Mabelia, Mankato/North Mankato MSA., and St. James). These communities will have the opportunity to access these specific talent pools and market the community as a place of high inclusion.	2.10	Dream It, Believe It, Achieve It - Youth program focused on communities of color; Provides youth career counseling and work experience opportunities; Provides employers cultural diversity training Prosperity Initiative Guided Pathways - high school career pathway program	Ongoing	South Central Workforce Council	Number of youth served from communities of color Number of students participating and succeeding
Retain the 75.4 percent of workers that presently live and work in Region Nine and commute to Region Nine for work; capture the nearly 32,000 jobs that the region is exporting to other areas of the state.	2.51	Discover St. James website Importing the printing of millions of tourism maps (over time) from either the East Coast of the United States or from China and using a local printer to help attract said revenues to Southern Minnesota SBDC consulting	Ongoing	City of St. James Corporate Graphics in Mankato, Mapformation	Hopefully to begin in Spring 2017 Strengthening operations and profitability of businesses leads to retention
Increase the awareness among students, parents, and educators about the educational requirements for future employment opportunities specific to the region.	2.43	Outreach to Schools/HECAP/PICE: the workforce system supports career counseling in high schools Rural Career Counselor Coordinator: provide labor market information to school counselors; asset map of workforce development programs and career counseling in schools Career Exploration Events: tour of manufacturing, scrubs camp, career expos, Construct Tomorrow, etc. Junior Achievement in Waseca County schools	Ongoing Complete in 2017 Ongoing Ongoing	South Central Workforce Council MN Valley Action Council South Central Workforce Council South Central Workforce, education and community partners City of Waseca, Janesville Waldorf-Pemberton Students engagement through graduate assistantships, presentations to classes, Entrepreneurship Club, and assisting student clients Area Career Exploration, Fairmont Area Life	Number of school districts Number of school districts Number of school districts Hours of engagement, client milestones achieved Number of schools that attend ACE (18)
Offer and increase the availability of cultural competency education throughout the region.	2.04	It's Time to Talk - Rural Equity and Opportunity Project Fairmont Area Life - encouraging professionals to come live in Martin County	Annual Event - April Complete May 2018	City of Fairmont, Fairmont Area Chamber, Visit Fairmont, business support YWCA, RNDC, Greater Mankato Diversity Council, Local community education programs City of Fairmont	Increased access to cultural competency education and the number of participants per session
Increase the median wage across all occupations in south central Minnesota from \$16.99 per hour closer to the state median wage of \$19.62 per hour by focusing on high wage and high employment occupations.	2.26				

Strategy	Priority	Project Description	Timeline	Partners and Stakeholders	Performance Measure / Evaluation
Offer and promote incentives, upskilling, job training and fast track education opportunities.	2.35	FastTRAC/Career Pathways programs for health care and manufacturing Job training	Ongoing	South Central Workforce Council, Adult Basic Education, SCC, community organizations	Number of students served and succeeding
Partner with area employers and workforce partners to create, evaluate and publish a list of top workplaces in the region.	2.08	Will have job postings on Discover St. James website	Ongoing	City of Fairmont, Fairmont Community Education and Recreation, Workforce Center	
Pursue additional funding to secure additional school and career counselors.	2.00	Workforce Council receives state funding for outreach to schools and rural career counseling coordination; Workforce Council has also added additional funding for workforce system to work with local school districts Hiring a school resource officer	May 2017 2017	South Central Workforce Council Fairmont Schools, City of Fairmont	Number of school district
Build and improve childcare capacity and availability throughout the region.	2.63				

Acronyms

- BEST of Waseca County:** Business and Entrepreneurial Support Team
CAF II and ARRA: Connect America Fund II and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
CGBP: Certified Global Business Professional
CIE: Center for Innovation and Excellence
CVB: Convention & Visitors Bureau
DEED: Department of Employment and Economic Development
EDA: Economic Development Administration
HECAP/PICE: Higher Education Career Advisors Pilot Project/Partners in Career Exploration
MDA: Minnesota Department of Agriculture
MnDOT: Minnesota Department of Transportation
MSU: Minnesota State University Mankato
NAICS/SIC: North American Industry Classification System/Standard Industrial Classification
PTAC: Procurement Technical Assistance Center
RCEF: Regional Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation
RNDC: Region Nine Development Commission
RTC: Renewing the Countryside
SBA: Small Business Administration
SBDC: Small Business Development Center
SCC: South Central College
SHIP: Statewide Health Improvement Partnership
SMIF: Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
SROC: Southern Research Outreach Center
STEAM: Science Technology Engineering Art and Mathematics
STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SWCD: Soil and Water Conservation District
UMN: University of Minnesota
USDA: United States Department of Agriculture
YWCA: Young Women's Christian Association



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