



Commission Meeting

Wednesday, October 12, 2022 at 6:00 p.m.



Bethany Lutheran College, 700 Luther Drive, Mankato, MN

COMMISSION MEETING

October 12, 2022 | Bethany Lutheran College – Honsey Hall Room #311

Dinner / Networking – 5:30 – 5:55 p.m. | Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

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 Sturm</i>			
IV. Approval of Agenda		1	Action
V. Approval of June 15, 2022 Minutes		2	Action
VI. Treasurer's Report – <i>Treasurer Dranttel</i>		7	Action
VII. Finance Director's Report – Ky Battern	6:05	11	
A. Audit Update			
VIII. Chair's Report – <i>Chair Laven</i>	6:15		
IX. Executive Director's Report – <i>Nicole Griensewic</i>	6:20	12	
X. Introduction to Foreign Trade Zones	6:30		
- <i>Paola Ferrario</i>			
XI. Economic Resilience and Link to Foreign Trade Zones	6:40		
- <i>Aaron Pacheco</i>			
XII. Commissioner Input Work – Session Planning for 2023	6:50		
- <i>Leah Petricka</i>			
XIII. Other Business	7:50		
A. Commissioner Updates			
B. Meeting Evaluation		Handout	
XI. Adjournment	8:00		Action

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Rohlring called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m. at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, MN.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tim Auringer, Elliot Belgard, Andrea Boettger, Jim Branstad, Steve Cooling, Chris Dalton, Brad DeVos, Marie Dranttel, Lyle Femrite, Elroy Glidden, Robert Goblirsch, Mike Laven, Blair Nelson, Kevin Paap, Mike Pfeil, Gary Richter, Steve Rohlring, Phil Schafer, Scott Schlueter, Gary Sturm

MEMBERS LATE: Keira Oeltjenbruns

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Steve Holmseth, Dawn Kratzke, Ayan Omar, Pam Rodewald, Roy Srp

MEMBERS ABSENT: Calvin Howard, Christian Lilienthal, Tom Loveall, Michele Miller, Richard Peterson, Chera Sevcik, Brigid Tuck, Jim Whitlock, Scott Windschitl

OTHERS PRESENT: Ronda Allis, Sam Parker, Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Kristian Braekkan, Joel Hanif, Leah Petricka, Sabri Fair, Nate George, Corree Johnson, Heather Bartelt

There was a quorum.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. APPROVAL OF APRIL 13, 2022 MINUTES

Schafer moved to approve the April 13, 2022 minutes as presented, Paap seconded. Motion carried.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Dranttel presented the Treasurer's Report.

Nelson moved to approve the Treasurer's Report, Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

VI. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Battern shared the Finance Director's report. Battern noted that there has not been much activity since the June 1 board meeting.

Battern noted that looking at the current budget for this year, RNDC will be underbudget for expenditures within the General Fund.

Battern shared that he will be working to provide the board with a monthly Budget to Actual Year to Date summary in FY23 with in the new adopted budget as part of the Treasurer's Report.

Battern noted that starting in July, RNDC will no longer be outsourcing the payroll process. This change will result in minimal added duties for the Finance Director and provide better system detail along with some cost savings.

Battern shared the remaining CARES Act RLF funding to distribute is \$211,380. Battern clarified with the Federal EDA that the CARES Act loan dollars need to be committed and disbursed by the middle of July. Originally Battern noted that the deadline to commit the remaining funds was June 30, 2022.

Battern shared that RLF recently had two loans closed.

Battern shared that an offer was extended and accepted to Francis Long for a Financial Specialist position. Battern noted that the Financial Specialist will work the RLF, alongside the finance director, take on the execution of the day-to-day tasks and handle payroll and accounts receivable.

Battern noted that RNAI has received some activity regarding some fiscal sponsorship opportunities.

A. Defederalization of RLF's

Battern presented and reviewed a document to the commissioners requesting defederalization of the three loans:

- #061902397
- #063902396
- #061961035

Dranttel moved to approve Defederalization of RLF Loans as presented. Dalton seconded. Motion carried.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Rohlfing thanked the RNDC staff for putting on a great bus tour.

Chair Rohlfing thanked the Full Commission for allowing him the opportunity to be Board Chair for the past five years.

A. Appointment of Chair

Chair of the Budget & Personnel Committee, Lyle Femrite, noted the committee met on May 25th and approved the nomination of Mike Laven as Full Commission Board Chair. Femrite went on to ask the Full Commission if there were any other nominations for Full Commission Board Chair. No other nominations were made.

Nelson moved to approve Mike Laven as Full Commission Board Chair. Dalton seconded. Motion carried.

VIII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Griensewic noted that RNDC extended an employment offer to Sabri Fair for the Associate Planner position. Fair will fill the Associate Planner position in August after completing one full year as RNDC's Lead4MN Fellow.

Griensewic introduced new employee, Paola Ferrario, Region Nine's new Community Development Planner. Griensewic then asked Paola to introduce herself to the Full Commission.

Griensewic noted that RNDC has been having dialogue to hire an Environment Energy Planner.

Griensewic thanked the RNDC team for their contributions during the heavy workload.

Griensewic asked Corree Johnson to give the Full Commission an update on her continuing education and RNDC work plans.

Griensewic asked Kristian Braekkan to give an update on the MRC Grant. Braekkan noted that as of this morning, RNDC submitted the Feasibility Study to the County of Waseca. Braekkan noted that the county intends to apply later this summer for EDA funding. MSU-M announced the programs they would like to roll out. Those fields include MinnPoly and Software Engineering/Construction Management. Braekkan thanked Commissioner Blair Nelson for his leadership with the Manufacturing Resource Center project.

Griensewic noted that RNDC's extension request with the Federal EDA has been accepted.

Griensewic shared that RNDC is currently behind on MnDOT spending due to staffing concerns.

Griensewic noted that she will be attending the NADO Summer Board Meeting later this month and the topic of immigration will be discussed.

Griensewic shared plans are developing for the first week in December for Commissioners and RNDC staff members have an exchange to North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. The purpose of the exchange will be to address Welcoming Communities and CSM and funding will be provided by the BUSH Foundation. Discussion followed.

Griensewic presented outgoing Chair Rohlfing with a word cloud from the RNDC staff and a plaque honoring his time as chair from the commission.

IX. MnDOT PRESENTATION CHIP

Chair Rohlfing introduced RNDC's partners from MnDOT, Ronda Allis and Sam Parker.

Ronda Allis, District 7 Planning Director shared with the Full Commission MnDOT's 10-year plan. Allis presented the commission with 3 maps. The first map reviewed was the 2022 Construction Map. The second map reviewed was the CHIP (Capital Highway Investment Plan) 10-year plan. Allis discussed the process for creating the 10-year plan and how each construction project was categorized. The third map discussed was the 2023-2026 draft projects. Allis noted that the MnDOT budget has suffered some budgeting issues this year and as a result, some projects have been placed on hold. Allis shared that MnDOT does outreach presentations every year during the summer months. Allis noted that the final plan for 2026 is due in August and MnDOT is still seeking public input. Discussion followed.

X. PUBLIC HEARING OF FY23 BUDGET

A. Call for Opening Public Hearing

Belgard made a motion to Open Public Hearing at 7:15 p.m.. Dalton seconded. Motion carried.

B. Approval of FY23 Operating Budget

Battern reviewed the FY23 operating budget with the Full Commission.

Laven made a motion to approve the FY23 Operating Budget. Belgard seconded. Motion carried.

C. Approval of Preliminary Levy

Battern reviewed the preliminary levy with the Full Commission.

Nelson made a motion to approve the Preliminary Levy. Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

D. Call for Close Public Hearing

Dalton made a motion to Close Public Hearing at 7:27 p.m.. Schlueter seconded. Motion carried.

XII. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Commissioner Updates

Chair Rohlring asked the Commissioners if there are any updates from their municipalities.

B. Meeting Evaluation

Chair Rohlring reminded the commissioners to fill out the evaluation handout.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Belgard moved to adjourn, Nelson seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Steve Rohlring, Chair

Gary Sturm, Secretary

REGION NINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
TREASURER'S REPORT
August 31, 2022

CASH BALANCE July 31, 2022 **\$ 3,041,016.60**

Cash Receipts - Checking	5,352.47	
Cash Receipts - Savings	-	
6 County deposits and interest	1,110.20	
9 County deposits and interest	7,891.21	
Tornado deposits and interest	5,383.23	
Cares deposits and interest	9,067.68	
Micro deposits and interest	1,093.46	
Interest	979.17	
TOTAL RECEIPTS		\$ 30,877.42
Payroll Disbursements		(80,328.01)
Accounts Payable & Other Disbursements		(54,674.07)

CASH BALANCE August 31, 2022 **\$ 2,936,891.94**

Region Nine Checking and Savings	
Checking	\$ 572,194.94
Savings	19,873.89
Total	\$ 592,068.83

Revolving Loan Funds	
6 County	\$ 153,630.36
9 County	849,750.61
Tornado	402,151.40
Cares Act	127,873.53
Micro	811,417.21
Total	\$ 2,344,823.11

CASH BALANCE August 31, 2022 **\$ 2,936,891.94**

Board Payment Listing

Region Nine Development Commission
Check Date from 8/1/2022 to 8/31/2022

Run Date: 10/3/2022
Run Time: 8:02:49 am
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Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
115425	08/22/2022	Extended Human Resources LLC	(472.50)	HR Support Job Description Updates
115427	08/01/2022	Dosan, Payton	483.75	USDA July Intern Hours & Supply Reimbursement
115428	08/01/2022	Washburn, Chance	698.89	USDA Intern July Hours & Supply Reimbursement
115429	08/18/2022	Abdo	3,600.00	Audit Services FY22 -- Invoice 460501
115430	08/18/2022	American Planning Association	149.00	APA Membership Leah P. - Invoice 389993-2243
115431	08/18/2022	American Solutions for Business	140.78	Business Cards for Paola - Invoice INV06146220
115432	08/18/2022	Blethen Berens	70.00	Conference 6/8/22 RE: EEO/Remote Workers - Statement No. 62
115433	08/18/2022	Creative Ad Solutions Inc	470.42	R9 Pens Qty 300 -- Invoice INV-25396
115434	08/18/2022	ESRI	1,208.00	ArcGIS Desktop Extentions and Annual Subscription - Invoice 94297156
115435	08/18/2022	GHG Corporation	75.00	Clockwise Timesheet Support August - Invoice 91605
115436	08/18/2022	GMS	4,214.50	Monthly Billing August and Annual Maintenance - Invoices 275697 to 275704
115437	08/18/2022	Goodwin, Nancy	1,525.00	Bush Grant Support Consulting 6/2/22 - 7/31/22 - August 1st Invoice
115438	08/18/2022	George, Nathan	25.56	Reimbursement Printed Materials for Local Foods Week
115439	08/18/2022	Kruse, David	96.00	MADO Dashboard Hosting August - Invoice KT2127
115440	08/18/2022	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Monthly Copier Lease 7/27/22 - 8/26/22 - Invoice INV2092047
115441	08/18/2022	Metro Sales Inc	393.29	Copier Usage 4/27/22 - 7/26/22 - Invoice INV2092094
115442	08/18/2022	Pacheco, Aaron	435.01	Airfare Reimbursement MarksNelson Training 8/9 - 8/11
115443	08/18/2022	Principal Life Insurance Company	61.18	Life Insurance Premiums 8/15/22 - 9/14/22 - 8.1.22 Statement
115444	08/18/2022	Spectrum	121.77	Business Internet 7/23/22 - 8/22/22
115445	08/18/2022	Spirited Journeys LLC	360.00	Filming and Planning 7/8/22 through 7/21/22 - Invoice 1186
115446	08/18/2022	Thriveon Inc	47.23	ThrivVoice August - Invoice 164789
115447	08/18/2022	Thriveon Inc	2,693.36	IT Billing August - Invoice 164788
115448	08/18/2022	University of Minnesota -- IonE	5,000.00	Climate-Smart Municipalities Project 2022
115449	08/18/2022	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	350.60	Janitorial Services August 2022 - Invoice 14167
115450	08/18/2022	Friesen's LLC dba Wooden Spoon	114.19	Food for Lunch and Learn and Room Rental
115451	08/18/2022	Living Earth Center	3,078.00	USDA Grant Expenditures
115452	08/18/2022	Rohlfing, Steve J	26.25	Mileage for 8/10 Board Meeting
115453	08/18/2022	Lilienthal, Christian	86.25	Mileage and PD for 8/10 Board Meeting
115454	08/18/2022	Dranttel, Marie	12.50	Mileage for 8/10 Board Meeting

Board Payment Listing

Region Nine Development Commission

Check Date from 8/1/2022 to 8/31/2022

Run Date: 10/3/2022

Run Time: 8:02:49 am

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Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
115455	08/18/2022	Schafer, Philip H	118.12	Mileage and PD for 8/10 Board Meeting
115456	08/18/2022	United Team Elite	428.00	R9 Shirts and Jackets for Staff
115457	08/18/2022	United Team Elite	30.00	Polo Top NG
115458	08/18/2022	Verizon Wireless	126.23	Cell & Hotspot Services 7/9/22 - 8/8/22 - Invoice 9912968895
115459	08/18/2022	CenturyLink	152.18	Phone Service 7/8/22 - 8/7/22 - Invoice 304622030
115460	08/22/2022	Dosan, Payton	611.99	August Intern Hours and Reimbursements - Wynn Nails Mankato - St. Peter Food Co-Op
115461	08/22/2022	Washburn, Chance	438.37	August Intern Hours and Reimbursements - Hy-Vee Mankato
115462	08/22/2022	Further	33.00	August Participant Fees - Invoice 16182125
115463	08/22/2022	Xcel Energy	67.36	Electricity Service 7/16/22 to 8/14/22 - Invoice 792348696
115464	08/22/2022	The Free Press	36.90	Public Notice - Mapleton 8/18/22 - Ad Number 631344
115465	08/22/2022	Goodwin, Nancy	1,125.00	Bush Grant Planning/Consulting - 8/1/22 - 8/18/22
115466	08/22/2022	Kruse, David	200.00	Lunch and Learn Speaking Engagement 6/29/22 - Invoice KT2128
115467	08/22/2022	Grell Feist PLC	3,500.00	Administrative Fee and Legal Fee for PERM Case - Invoice 746 - Alejandra Bejarano
115468	08/22/2022	Extended Human Resources LLC	472.50	Holding Fee for Job Description Updates - Check Relssue (115425)
Check Total			32,780.93	
Report Total			32,780.93	

REGION NINE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
August 2022 CASH RECEIPTS
FY23

Description	Amount	
DATE: 8/11/22		
Renewing the Country Side ACH	631.25	
TOTALS		631.25
DATE: 8/17/22		
State of MN Transit ACH	1,806.22	
TOTALS		1,806.22
DATE: 8/1/22		
RLF Loan Client Fees	2,895.00	
TOTALS		2,895.00
DATE: 8/31/22		
Employee Refund Payment	20.00	
TOTALS		20.00
August 2022 TOTALS		5,352.47

Finance

- The public accounting firm contracted to perform our annual audit, Abdo, started a hybrid audit the week of September 6th. The audit team assigned to R9 is brand new to our organization with Layne Kockelman serving as the manager in charge. This being a new client for all but Layne and coupled with this being my first year going through an audit with R9 progress has started slow in getting through the audit requirements. The biggest challenge throughout this process has been the learning of the software and how it makes allocations and populates reports. However, progress is being made and I don't believe it to be a concern.
- Preliminary numbers of the Audit show a large growth in our unreserved fund balance of close to \$400k. The main factors contributing to this increase:
 - The organization has been rolling forward large deferred revenue accruals for many years that sum to more than \$180k. These dollars relate to prior revenues received in for projects that have long since ended, but have never been moved to fund balance. In speaking with Abdo as to what should be done with these amounts the current consensus is to recognize them as revenue this year effectively moving them to fund balance. Work is still being done to find any specific grant agreements that could state whether these funds are for restricted or unrestricted purposes, but for now they are being considered unrestricted.
 - The organization had close to \$200k included within its budget for transfers to other proprietary funds such as Staff Transition, Copier, and Auto Fund. Given the health of these other funds these transfers are not considered necessary.
- Revenues and expenses are up significantly in comparison to the prior year given the amount of CARES Act RLF dollars expended in FY22.

Revolving Loan Fund

- Frances and I have worked to get all of our current loan clients amortization schedule into digital format. We can now access data with greater ease and offer clients final payment timelines for any loans extended beyond original terms.
- I will be sending out a request for our Loan Committee to meet in the month of November to discuss updating our Revolving Loan Plan, review committee terms, and to have a general discussion of our RLF procedures.

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- Region 9 has continued working with a start up organization known as 'The Reconciliation Learning Journey' that pairs up those of Dakota decent with Caucasian individuals from our area to take part in a bus tour of varying historical sites regarding Native American and settler conflicts in this area. The date for the event is scheduled for October 8th.

Staff Updates – October 2022

Nicole Griensewic

Internal

Internally the team has had follow up conversations from the MarksNelson Strategic Organizational trainings that were led by Steve Etcher this August. Have asked Heather to help take the lead on follow up to ensure the team and leadership continue to revisit the plan and its goals. (Included at back of packet, for reference)

HR consultants have assisted the team with updating job descriptions. Griensewic has also been delivering performance evaluations to all direct reports.

A position is posted for an Energy/ Environment Planner to join the team. This position will report to Leah as the Community Development Director. Because of this as well as project priorities, Paola will now report directly to Griensewic, and Alejandra will now report directly to Kristian as Economic Development Director. This change will better align with current projects. Interviews begin the first week of October.

In consultation with the board of directors, it was decided to postpone the 50th anniversary of RNDC until the January full commission meeting. Concerns over timing of the elections as well as commission retirements were part of the decision to postpone.

Will be looking to board and Budget & Personnel Committee leadership to set goals for the Executive Director position in the next year. Currently in my tenth year with the organization and want to ensure I am meeting, if not, exceeding expectations. Also, excited to share with the commission that because of completing three Executive Education Courses through the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS), Griensewic now has a certificate in Public Policy. The professional development was made possible through the CARES Act. In addition, the first week of September, Griensewic completed the HKS course, “Climate Change Policy: Economics and Politics”.

Holding a *Lunch and Learn* for the RNDC team on Oct. 12th. Will be sharing main highlights and ‘take aways’ from the HKS courses: “Senior Executives in Local & State Government” and “Climate Change Policy: Economics & Politics”.

Have been assisting with planning and coordination of the MADDO All Staff Training to occur in Mankato on Nov. 1-3rd. Through support of the Blandin Foundation, RNDC is organizing a program for the evening of Tuesday Nov. 1st at the Kato Ballroom. Chair Laven will be present to welcome the group of development commission staff. The topic for the evening is on the importance of, “Diversity of Thought”. Speakers include: a Human Rights Activist & Chinese dissident, visual artist as well as a performing artist. Griensewic and Braekkan will help facilitate the evening’s conversation.

External

Have been busy working with Paola and other partners on creating an agenda for the RNDC delegation to North Rhine Westphalia the first week of December. Germany partners are excited to host the group of 15, which includes four commissioners, three Welcoming Community Champions from St. James, four staff, private sector, MPCA, U of M's Institute on the Environment, and others. Leadership from MSUM plan to 'meet up' with the delegation while in the area visiting other higher educational institutions. The learning exchange is possible through generous support of the BUSH Foundation.

Preparing to attend the NADO Annual Training Conference in Pittsburgh Oct. 14-18th. Vice Chair Boettger will also be attending on behalf of the board. RNDC will be recognized for an Impact Award for our work with local foods and hosting the Growers Network.

MADO has been working with Great Plains Institute and other partners who work in the climate/ energy space. A 'good problem' as of late is the availability of funding for energy projects in small communities. RNDC and MADO are trying to better understand the funding opportunities that exist in the Infrastructure Jobs Act/ Inflation Reduction Act. The challenge is the need for 'energy liaisons' to work one on one with community leaders to understand what is available and how to apply for grant funds. The MN Dept. of Commerce and MPCA have been strong partners with the RDOs in breaking down the funding programs and categories.

Heather Bartelt

Aside from her regular duties as executive assistant, Heather represented Region Nine at the monthly REDA Advisory Committee Meeting in St. Peter. The primary focus of the meeting was an update on the GMG Resident Recruitment Billboard campaign. Other topics discussed included the GMG Main Street Economic Revitalization Program (MSERP) Grant, GreenSeam and the 2023 Governor's Fishing Opener. An additional area of interest Bartelt has been focusing on, is continuing the discussion of the MarkNelson Training with Steve Etcher to ensure that follow up occurs in the RNDC office.

Alejandra Bejarano

Alejandra is currently wrapping up the strategic planning for the city of Eagle Lake and drafting the final plan. Asides from that, Alejandra and Kristian are leading a local task force on talent retention. A recent outcome of the task force is that this year's Career & Internship EXPO event at MNSU will have an immigration attorney present to educate students and employers about hiring international students and answer any questions about work authorization. Erin Schutte Wadzinski, attorney and owner of Kivu Immigration Law in Worthington, will collaborate with the Career Development Center and Kearney International

Center at MNSU to support this effort. Additionally, as part of this initiative, Alejandra and Kristian will connect with Mayo Clinic to explore opportunities for employment of international students.

Alejandra continues to support the “informal to formal project” that HACER is leading with support of the University Minnesota Extension and Region Nine. Alejandra connects with the group biweekly meetings, which have focused on defining and conceptualizing “informality,” defining participation eligibility and criteria for project participants, discussing IRB approval, and data collection, among others.

Recently, Alejandra joined the South Central Workforce Council as the economic development representative. Alejandra joined September’s meeting which focused on labor shortages, recruiting and hiring challenges, finding talent in underserved communities and creating job opportunities for diverse workers.

Kristian Braekkan

Kristian has been working on three Federal EDA planning grant applications with Paola, Alejandra, and Sabri respectively. One seeks funding to explore regional readiness as it pertains to attract foreign direct investment. The second will explore workforce recruitment and retention strategies. The third aims to develop a green manufacturing implementation plan for the region. Kristian has also worked with Heather and the community reviewers to make recommendations for the Main Street Revitalization grant (GMG) from DEED, and has supported Alejandra’s work with MSU. He is also working with Aaron on a series of studies exploring the relationship between economic well-being and foreign direct investments, industry structures generating labor shortages, etc. Finally, Kristian works with Alejandra on a project with HACER and U of M Extension – funded by McKnight Foundation exploring informal entrepreneurship in the state.

Sabri Fair

As part of the MBFFA grant Sabri has been working with Paola to conduct interviews with community leaders and entrepreneurs from underserved communities. The purpose of the interviews is to hear about roadblocks hindering the development of their businesses. Once the interview process is complete, they will compile their findings and create recommendations for implementation by organizations in our region.

In preparation for year two of the USDA/NRCS grant Sabri and the grant partners have been setting goals for the next year. One of the main projects for year two will be designing and implementing curriculum to help people growing at the Living Earth Center prepare for selling at the local farmer’s markets. To do this he is arranging meetings with incubator farms across the state to learn about the support they provide their growers.

After receiving preliminary approval from the city council of Comfrey Sabri is preparing a proposal of services to conduct an energy and environment planning process for the City of Comfrey. The aim of the plan is to understand the city government and citizens goals related to electricity costs, heating and cooling costs, water use, waste management, and food access among other topic areas. After assessing the community's interests and needs the plan will provide them with resources and direction to help them meet those goals.

Paola Ferrario

Paola has been working on interviews with Sabri to leaders and entrepreneurs of underserved communities in collaboration with Minnesota State Mankato's Strategic Partnerships Center and other four regional organizations to support disadvantaged small businesses. The program is called "Mainstreet Businesses Focused on Food and Agriculture," and one of its goals is to increase communication, education, and technical assistance offered to small businesses and underserved entrepreneurs, including micro and rural businesses in the agriculture and food-related sector.

She has also been leading and onboarding the team in a project management tool that enables the organization to jointly generate a work chart, timelines, gannt reports and collaborate with more transparency and efficiency, maximizing the team's output. This was a result

From the strategic planning session that was discussed at the annual retreat. The onboarding of the team has been completed and the team is now going to get biweekly training and continue the professional development on project management.

Paola has been working on generating a budget for the Germany Welcoming Communities a & Clean Energy delegation and talking to stakeholders as well as organizing the logistics and overall objective alongside the Executive Director, Nicole. The organization is going smoothly and the details and

Objectives are being ultimate.

Paola is leading the technical assistance grant request to the Federal EDA for the next year to do a feasibility grant on Foreign Direct Investment. The grant rough draft is done and will go to the next stage. The team comprises of Nicole, Kristian and Aaron.

Paola participated in the meting of Launch Minnesota, where she presented the opportunity to connect various thought leaders of the area to support entrepreneurial efforts in the region as well as making the connection with the Global Entrepreneurship Network

So that Region 9 can access more resources like the Global Business Angel Investor Network, the Policy Network, Startup Huddle network and Research network. GEN is the leading organization with the support of the Kauffman Foundation in entrepreneurial efforts

In the US and throughout the world.

Paola has been collaborating in the 2022 CEDS Annual Performance Report by onboarding the program to the project management tool that has helped the team generate a gannt report that showcases the deadlines as has helped the team with organizing the

Project with objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-based.

Nate George

Nate finished editing and designing the Annual Report and is getting ready to submit it to the state once the financial audit is completed. This document provides the state with a summary of RNDC's projects and finances for the 2022 fiscal year.

He worked with Leah Petricka on a proposal for Le Sueur County. Petricka recently presented this proposal. Along with this proposal, Nate has been working with Alejandra Bejarano on a plan for Eagle Lake.

Nate wrote and distributed the RNDC newsletter with support from Corree Johnson. He also had multiple press releases picked up by local media. This included Mike Laven being named the board chair and RNDC receiving a NADO Impact Award.

He has also been working with Leah on ways to improve recruiting for future job postings. He is also working with the planning team to prepare the annual performance report.

These tasks were completed along with the day-to-day tasks of website maintenance, social media posts & promotions, and internal & external communications.

Joel Hanif

Joel attended the public hearing at the Mapleton Planning and Zoning Commission. The planning and zoning commission recommended approval of the comprehensive plan to the City Council. The City Council followed this recommendation and approved the comprehensive plan at their September 13 meeting.

Madelia's Safe Routes to School plan is progressing well. Joel and Sabri attended multiple back-to-school functions and solicited input from parents and students on dangerous areas in town for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Joel and Sabri also deployed Region Nine's bike and pedestrian counters in St. James after receiving a request from their economic development coordinator.

In the USDA/NRCS local foods project, Joel is currently working on reporting for the end of year 1. This includes gathering statistics on number of farmers, especially those considered historically underserved, reached by Region Nine and its partners. It also includes a summary of all activities carried out by Region Nine and its partners in the past year.

Most of Joel's time in late September and October will be dedicated to completing the Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan. The draft plan will be submitted to MnDOT for review in late October.

Corree Johnson

Corree Johnson has been working with the City of St. James to create a community survey that will aid RNDC and St. James during development of an economic resiliency plan. This survey will also be utilized as we assist St. James with an EDA application.

She attends regular weekly planning meetings for the BUSH grant to assist with project planning, developing marketing materials, and completing the final sections of the equity blueprint.

Corree has also been leading efforts to redesign and update the RNDC website. She hosted a meeting with Lime Valley and is in the process of finalizing the project timeline and is currently researching designs and functions that will be added to the updated site. She is also thoroughly going through all website content to make sure that it is updated.

Additionally, Corree and Paola Ferrario will be engaging with the Legislative & Communications Committee in the new year. Tentative meeting dates have been set and a survey/meeting will be held with the new committee after the January Full Commission meeting.

Aaron Pacheco

Aaron Pacheco is finishing his small part of the Eagle Lake strategic planning project by sharing the final maps and tables generated during the analysis and contributing text for the final report. His larger focus has been shifted on the planning stages of the larger study looking at the labor crisis and the growingly precarious workforce industries have been relying on to fill the infamous employment void. In its planning stages, the study is developing scope regarding industry, economic measures, timescale, and to what geographic extent surrounding Region Nine should the lens of this study be fixed. Collecting existing research and literature to build the foundation of the study, the collaboration with researchers at Indiana University, Bloomington studying labor in meat processing industries in the United States has produced much guidance in tailoring a similar study for Region Nine and the greater Midwest.

Leah Petricka

Leah has spent the majority of her time on four projects. In Le Sueur, she presented her report to the County Board of Commissioners on September 20. She provided them with her personal recommendations to narrow down the options and encouraged them to consider an application to the EDA to support the initiative further.

Leah joined the team to execute engagements in Waseca and Le Center as part of the initial Bush foundation grant to build inclusive and resilient communities. Leah conducted one-on-one interviews with five individuals leading into a discovery session held on September 22. Thirteen representatives came to the discovery session to put for topics for further engagement in the community. Leah will be deploying a post meeting survey to collect feedback for holding three community meetings for all the residents of Le Center.

Leah has been working on the APR (Annual Performance Report) for the CEDS and deploying qualitative feedback sessions to help guide goals for the 2023. A survey has been sent out, several speaking engagements for in-person feedback. The CEDS APR is due to the EDA in January 2023.

Finally, Leah has stayed committed to building entrepreneurial ecosystems by attending two conferences for bridging entrepreneurship, participating in LaunchMN and 1 Million Cups initiatives, providing feedback to the Small Business Development Center on project ideas, and leading the consultant to gather information related to the revolving loan programs throughout the region. She continues to coach Wells as part of REV.

Strategic Goals	Strategic Objectives	Strategies/Tactics	Measurable	Responsible Entity	Timeline
1. Be a recognized voice for issues in the region	1.1 Increase engagement with State leaders	1.1.1 Host forum for state leaders to become more aware of the region			
	1.2 Increase engagement with regional organizations	1.2.1 Host a roundtable event for key regional organizations to share their challenges. 1.2.2 Participate in teams to develop strategies to address common challenges where R9 has expertise			
	1.3 Increase engagement with local jurisdictions	1.3.1 Hold listening posts to better understand local needs and challenges 1.3.2 Prepare impactful strategies to address identified needs and challenges where R9 has expertise			
2. Develop niche expertise	2.1 Develop recognized specialization in planning	2.1.1 Attract and develop team members that excel in planning 2.1.2 Distinguish R9 by going beyond planning to implementation—Highlight successful projects			
	2.2 Align niche opportunities with staff expertise	2.2.1 Create a niche map of services and specialties to identify opportunities and strengths 2.2.2 Provide training opportunities to grow niche expertise 2.2.3 Engage subcontractors to fill niche needs and provide mentoring			
3. Improve organizational performance	3.1 Attract, retain and develop talented team members	3.1.1 Create professional development plans for team members 3.1.2 Maintain and expand relationships with institutions that can provide future talent			
	3.2 Improve project management approach	3.2.1 Implement project tracking system 3.2.2 Improve collaboration on projects with team members			
	3.3 Create & maintain organizational culture that embraces and encourages teamwork	3.3.1 Implement internal communication improvement tools			
	3.4 Maintain clarity and focus on organization mission	3.4.1 Conduct periodic team meeting to review mission and align projects 3.4.2 Provide quarterly progress evaluation of strategic action plan and shift if necessary to create desired outcome			

Strategic Goals	Strategic Objectives	Strategies/Tactics	Measurable	Responsible Entity	Timeline
4. Increase organizational value to the region	4.1 Establish a data repository and information resource center	4.1.1 Inventory data and information needs of clients 4.1.2 Identify data sources to respond to needs			
	4.2 Become a resource connector in the region	4.2.1 Inventory resources available in the region 4.2.2 Establish a portal for patrons and organizations to access data			
	4.3 Provide and develop team specialization to address challenges and opportunities	4.3.1 Conduct a regional needs assessment to determine and inventory needs 4.3.2 Prioritize needs in the region 4.3.3 Identify specialties, training, and skills necessary to address the needs			
	4.4 Become a recognized thought leader	4.4.1 Create a forum to encourage strategic thinking around issues in the region 4.4.2 Create strategic action plans for the pressing issues in the region 4.4.3 Promote programs and success, recognizing other key organizations and contributors			
	4.5 Deliver results-on time, on budget, exceeding expectations	4.5.1 Create a project milestone and timeline report for each project 4.5.2 Periodically report on the project progress in relation to the timeline and budget 4.5.3 Promote successfully completed projects			
5. Improve understanding and awareness of RNDC	5.1 Promote R9 services and capabilities to State leaders	5.1.1 Host a Region 9 Day at the Capitol 5.1.2 Set a meeting (breakfast) in MSP with state agency directors and key staff to showcase R9 and communicate priority needs (non-partisan)			
	5.2 Promote R9 services and capabilities to regional organizations	5.2.1 Invite regional organizations to R9 meetings or events to get a deeper understanding			
	5.3 Promote R9 services and capabilities to local organizations	5.3.1 Review meeting format, time, location and participants and adjust as needed. 5.3.2 Use meetings to showcase value, not just transact business			

NICHE IDENTIFICATION & ASSET MAPPING

COMMUNITY & REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	R9 Role	R9 Climate	R9 Qualifications	Other Entities
Needs Assessment & Information Gathering				CEDA, GMG, SCSC, Eng
Planning				Same as above no GMG
Policy Development				State Assoc, NADO, Prof Assoc
Project Development				SM, GMG
Project Execution & Implementation				CEDA
Project Reporting & Information Sharing				GMG, CEDA
Project Evaluation				Academia

Observations: Region 9 is filling and equipped to serve the community development needs of the region. Opportunities exist for growth in the business climate in the region to elevate R9 to the role of a trusted advisor. Project implementation is a niche that R9 could excel at with the proper team skills. This niche can be a solid revenue generator and will also help R9 better understand the project impacts for reporting. Additionally, success in project deliverables will elevate R9 reputation.

Roles	Business Climate	Team Qualifications
Lead	Trusted Advisor	Specialized
Support		Experienced
Participate	Competitive	
Monitor		Novice
None	Overlooked	Undeveloped

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	R9 Role	R9 Climate	R9 Qualifications	Other Entities
Needs Assessment & Information Gathering				DEED, Private, Academia
Planning				CEDA
Policy Development				Ellers
Project Development				Local communities, banks, varies
Project Execution & Implementation				Local, private sector
Project Reporting & Information Sharing				DEED, Academia
Project Evaluation				

Observations: Many economic development districts across the country take a large role in economic development activities. Economic development is more than entertaining and attracting businesses (which is often the primary focus of local economic development organizations). There is a real niche for regional organizations in economic development activities, around planning and product development. Product development includes making sure the community has the infrastructure to support business growth (water, sewer, electric, gas, roads, etc), workforce with the proper skills, housing to accommodate a growing workforce, transportation services, educational resources, and a quality of place that is desired.

Roles	Business Climate	Team Qualifications
Lead	Trusted Advisor	Specialized
Support		Experienced
Participate	Competitive	
Monitor		Novice
None	Overlooked	Undeveloped

SOCIAL CHANGE & AWARENESS	R9 Role	R9 Climate	R9 Qualifications	Other Entities
Needs Assessment & Information Gathering				Extension, RTC, CERTs, GPI, Div. Council
Planning				Extension, RTC, CERTs, GPI, Div. Council
Policy Development				Extension, RTC, CERTs, GPI, Div. Council
Project Development				Extension, RTC, CERTs, GPI, Div. Council, YWCA
Project Execution & Implementation				
Project Reporting & Information Sharing				
Project Evaluation				

Observations: Region 9 staff has a passion for this issue and has been involved with several key initiatives, yet it is not necessarily a recognized attribute or role of the organization. Opportunities for increased collaboration with other stakeholders in this arena should be pursued. Region9 is in an unique position to facilitate this work and conversations without politicization.

Roles	Business Climate	Team Qualifications
Lead	Trusted Advisor	Specialized
Support		Experienced
Participate	Competitive	
Monitor		Novice
None	Overlooked	Undeveloped

EMERGING ISSUES	R9 Role	R9 Climate	R9 Qualifications	Other Entities
Needs Assessment & Information Gathering				Higher Ed, State agencies
Planning				CEDA
Policy Development				NADO, GMPP
Project Development				ACE, Higher Ed
Project Execution & Implementation				DEED, Higher Ed
Project Reporting & Information Sharing				
Project Evaluation				Extension

Observations: Region 9 is very active in this arena as emerging issues aligns with the passions of team members. Opportunities in this niche can be further developed in the needs assessment and information gathering segments. Being aware of emerging issues will lead to conversations, but conversation alone doesn't lead to change. R9 has the team skills to assess and validate or invalidate trends and the impacts it may or may not have on the region. R9 can be the trusted "third party" that gathers the data and can look objectively at the data and then advise on key strategies to advance or dismiss issues of importance.

Roles	Business Climate	Team Qualifications
Lead	Trusted Advisor	Specialized
Support		Experienced
Participate	Competitive	
Monitor		Novice
None	Overlooked	Undeveloped

Terms & Abbreviations

AURI – Agricultural Utilization Research Institute

CEDS – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

CGMC – Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities

DEED – Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

DHS – Minnesota Department of Human Services

EDA – Economic Development Administration

EDD – Economic Development District

GAC – Gustavus Adolphus College

GIS – Geographic Information Systems

GMG – Greater Mankato Growth

GMDC – Greater Mankato Diversity Council

GMNP – Greater Minnesota Partnership

HACER – Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research

HUD – Department of Housing and Urban Development

LCWM – Lake Crystal Welcome Memorial

LGU – Local Government Unit

LMI – Labor Market Information

LMI – Low-to-Moderate Income

MADO – Minnesota Association of Development Organizations

MAPO – Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization

MDH – Minnesota Department of Health

MnDOT – Minnesota Department of Transportation

MnSCU – Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System

MPCA – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

MSA – Metropolitan Statistical Area

MSU-M – Minnesota State University, Mankato

MYLAP – MN Young America Leaders Program

NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Services

REDA – Regional Economic Development Alliance

REV – Rural Entrepreneurial Venture

RLF – Revolving Loan Fund

RNAI – Region Nine Area Inc.

RNDC – Region Nine Development Commission

SBDC – Small Business Development Center

SCBDN – South Central Business Development Network

SCC – South Central College

SHIP – Statewide Health Improvement Partnership

SMIF – Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

SRTS – Safe Routes to Schools

TAC – Transportation Advisory Committee