



REGION NINE



**DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, September 13, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.



3 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 310, Mankato, Minnesota

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

September 13, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. | Region Nine Development Commission

AGENDA

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Action</u>
I. Call to Order	4:30		
II. Roll Call – <i>Secretary Branstad</i>			
III. Approval of Agenda		1	<u>Action</u>
IV. Approval of August 9, 2023 Minutes		2	<u>Action</u>
V. Treasurer's Report – <i>Treasurer Dranttel</i>		7	<u>Action</u>
VI. Finance Director's Report – <i>Ky Battern</i>	4:40	10	
A. Audit Update			
VII. Chair's Report – <i>Chair Laven</i>	5:25		
A. Introduction of New Staff – Courtney Wright			
B. Out of State Travel Request		11	<u>Action</u>
VIII. Executive Director's Report – <i>Nicole Griensewic</i>		13	
A. NADO Staff Site Visit	5:35		
IX. Other Business			
A. Commissioner Updates	5:50		
B. Meeting Evaluation		Handout	
X. Adjournment	6:00		<u>Action</u>

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m. at RNDC in Mankato, MN

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andrea Boettger, Jim Branstad, Marie Dranttel, Lyle Femrite, Mike Laven, Phil Schafer

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Tom Loveall, Steve Rohlfig

MEMBERS ABSENT: Christian Lilienthal

OTHERS PRESENT: Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Nate George, Sabri Fair, Heather Bartelt

There was a quorum.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Schafer moved to approve the agenda. Boettger seconded. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF JUNE 7, 2023 MINUTES

Femrite moved to approve the June 7, 2023 minutes as presented, Branstad seconded. Motion carried.

V. TREASURER'S REPORT

Dranttel presented the Treasurer's Report.

Shafer moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Boettger seconded. Motion carried.

Battern shared the new layout of the audit-ready monthly statements with the board. Battern noted that the next step will be to eliminate the cash receipts and cash balances report. The finished report layout will show actual bank reconciled bank amounts.

Battern shared that there was a larger-than-expected reduction in the General Fund balance, due to the lesser allocation of time by RNDC towards the completion of the USDA grant, as compared to the initial projection.

Battern shared that conversations have been held with Blue Earth County regarding potentially taking over the administration of the area's Emergency Communications Board (ECB). Blue Earth County has served notice to the ECB stating they will no longer be assuming the responsibilities. The program works to ensure that emergency responders have the ability and bandwidth to reliability communicate in disaster or emergency situations. The coverage area for this program approximately matches the service area for Region Nine. Members of the ECB would pay a set fee to Region Nine to oversee the program and we would need to allocate approximately 500 hours of staff time. Discussion followed.

VI. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Battern highlighted the transition from Wells Fargo to US Bank is approaching its final stages. At present, no financial transactions have been initiated, pending the completion of the required paperwork by the MAGIC Fund. Battern noted that the conversion process is slated for finalization by the end of August, enabling RNDC to use the account.

Battern shared that an offer for the Loan Specialist position was extended and accepted to Courtney Wright. Wright will join RNDC on August 21st.

VII. CHAIR'S REPORT

A. DRAFT Code of Conduct Review

Chair Laven addressed the drafted code of conduct with the board. Laven noted that the purpose of having a code of conduct is to act as a guide in the event issues arise. Discussion followed.

B. Board Portal Review

George walked through the Board Portal with the board. Griensewic asked the board for their input regarding what information would be valuable to add to the Board Portal. Commissioner Branstad suggested having the full RNDC meetings calendar posted. Chair Laven proposed a comprehensive review of the page's sequencing to enhance its overall coherence and flow. Commissioner Dranttel expressed interest in having the Audit Reports available on the portal. Discussion followed.

VIII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A. Local Foods Presentation

Fair presented on Building a Local Foods System in Region Nine. Fair shared the story of a local small farm that has been successfully growing vegetables and selling them to local schools, restaurants, the St. Peter coop, and Farmer's Markets.

Fair shared the benefits of having Local Food and Farmers include:

- Keeps money local
- Food creates a community and sense of home for immigrants
- Increase resilience of our food system
- Increase health and wellbeing of communities

Fair noted that RNDC is achieving these goals of Building a Local Foods System in Region Nine with the assistance of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Grant. The NRCS Grant allows RNDC to facilitate the Region Nine Grower's Network with trainings and education opportunities, community building and problem solving. Fair shared that land access is a barrier, so RNDC has been working with the Living Earth Center to offer larger growing spaces at an incubator farm.

Fair highlighted Local Foods Week that took place July 24 – 30, 2023. Fair noted that 7 farmers and 8 restaurants participated in the event and the goal was for the restaurants to create a dish highlighting foods from local farmers. RNDC took on the role of highlighting the stories behind the food to educate consumers on the availability of local foods.

Fair shared that he has been working with Farmland Access Meet & Greet to connect farmers looking to retire with new farmers. Fair noted the next event will take place on September 10th in Montgomery, MN.

Fair noted that Region 5 was the lead applicant and awarded the MiNKota grant by the USDA Regional Food Business Center for the next five years. Fair shared this will allow RNDC to continue working on the incubator farm with the Living Earth Center and Local Foods Week.

Fair shared that he is currently preparing an application for Regional Food Recovery Plan. The application would help farmers spread the word about their crops being available and not having food end up in local landfills because there is no system set up to capture it. Discussion followed.

Fair noted that RNDC was awarded \$100,000 from the Department of Energy to do a Bioeconomy Development Opportunity Zone (BDOZ) assessment. RNDC will be working with a consultant to investigate agricultural waste and residue that would normally end up in landfills and convert them into energy.

B. NADO Recap

Griensewic shared that NADO Staff Retreat will be held in Minnesota and will have the first-ever NADO site visit to RNDC on August 31st. Griensewic has created an agenda for the day. RNDC will be able to highlight our work as well as NADO sharing their work with RNDC.

C. Staffing Updates

Griensewic shared that RNDC has extended an offer to Mercedes Sempe for part-time temporary work (approximately 6 months). Sempe will help facilitate round table discussions and outreach to the communities.

D. Out of State Travel Request – Courtney Wright

Battern recommended Courtney Wright to attend a loan software conference in Denver, on September 13th.

Branstad moved to approve the Out of State Travel Request for Courtney Wright.
Schafer seconded. Motion carried.

Griensewic shared that RNDC was not awarded the FDI grant.

Griensewic noted that RNDC is still pursuing the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). If awarded that would be for a part-time temporary position.

Griensewic shared that RNDC made it to the second round for an Economic Recovery Corps fellow for 2 ½ years.

Griensewic shared a press release for Angie's Kettle Corn recognizing them as a Small Business Administration Legacy Business.

Griensewic shared with the board that Commissioner Doug Trytten passed away.

Griensewic shared that Councilman Matt Peterson was on the Council agenda to be appointed to RNDC Commission by North Mankato on August 7th. Peterson, if approved, will replace Commissioner Whitlock on the RNDC Full Commission.

Griensewic noted that RNDC will be involved in an MPCA event in St. Peter on August 11th. The MPCA will announce the Southern Minnesota Resiliency Grants in St. Peter, Comfrey and New Ulm.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Commissioner Updates

Commissioners shared updates from the municipalities.

B. Meeting Evaluation

Chair Laven reminded the members of the Board to fill out the meeting evaluation handout.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Femrite moved to adjourn. Boettger seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

Mike Laven, Chair

Jim Branstad, Secretary

DRAFT

Region Nine Development Commission

Balance Sheet

As of July 31, 2023

	<u>General</u>	<u>Legacy RLF</u>	<u>CARES Act RLF</u>	<u>Auto Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assets					
Cash	\$ 604,080	\$ 1,845,538	\$ 82,759	\$ 81,113	\$ 2,613,490
Receivables					
Taxes - Current	308,545	-	-	-	308,545
General Accounts Receivable	32,183	-	-	-	32,183
Grants Accounts Receivable	271,252	-	-	-	271,252
Revolving Loan - Current	-	139,298	116,982	-	256,280
Revolving Loan - Long-Term	-	1,060,666	759,804	-	1,820,470
Revolving Loan - Delinquent	-	24,747	29,000	-	53,747
Capital Assets, Net of Depreciation	14,201	-	-	-	14,201
Prepays	21,108	-	-	-	21,108
Total Assets	<u>1,251,369</u>	<u>3,070,249</u>	<u>988,545</u>	<u>81,113</u>	<u>5,391,276</u>
Liabilities					
Accounts Payable	22,222	-	-	-	22,222
Due to Other Funds	(43,003)	62,363	(19,360)	-	-
Accrued Wages Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Accrued Payroll Liabilities	9,065	-	-	-	9,065
Unearned Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Accrued Leave Payable	28,652	-	-	-	28,652
Variance to be Reconciled	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	<u>16,936</u>	<u>62,363</u>	<u>(19,360)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>59,939</u>
Deferred Inflows of Resources					
Property Taxes Levied for Subsequent Year	304,006	-	-	-	304,006
Delinquent Taxes	4,539	-	-	-	4,539
Total Deferred Inflows of Resources	<u>308,545</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>308,545</u>
Fund Balances					
Non-Spendable - Prepaid Items	21,108	-	-	-	21,108
Restricted for Future Loans	-	3,007,886	981,872	-	3,989,758
Restricted Fund Balance	-	-	-	81,113	81,113
Unassigned	904,780	-	26,033	-	930,813
Total Fund Balances	<u>925,888</u>	<u>3,007,886</u>	<u>1,007,905</u>	<u>81,113</u>	<u>5,022,792</u>
Total Liabilities, Deferred Inflows of Resources and Fund Balances	<u>1,251,369</u>	<u>3,070,249</u>	<u>988,545</u>	<u>81,113</u>	<u>5,391,276</u>
	-	-	-	-	-

Region Nine Development Commission
Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes
As of July 31, 2023

	<u>General</u>	<u>Legacy RLF</u>	<u>CARES Act RLF</u>	<u>Auto Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Revenues					
Levy					
Taxes	-	-	-	-	-
Federal Grants					
EDA Planning Grant	8,869	-	-	-	8,869
Other Federal Grants	10,541	-	-	-	10,541
Transportation					
Transportation - MnDOT Contract	8,087	-	-	-	8,087
Transportation - Other	-	-	-	-	-
Other Grants	310	-	-	-	310
Contract Revenue	4,641	-	-	-	4,641
Deposit Interest & Dividends	2,801	1,566	194	-	4,561
Loan Interest Earned	-	4,875	276	-	5,151
CARES Act RLF Loan Proceeds	-	-	-	-	-
Loan Administration Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer Funds	-	-	-	-	-
Other Revenue	-	-	26	-	26
Total Revenues	<u>35,249</u>	<u>6,441</u>	<u>496</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>42,186</u>
Expenses					
Salary & Wages	55,028	1,315	0	-	56,343
Fringe Benefits	16,320	429	0	-	16,749
Indirect Costs	13,048	351	58	-	13,457
Consultants	3,931	-	-	-	3,931
Staff Travel	1,198	-	-	95	1,293
Supplies	337	26	-	-	363
Copying	834	-	-	-	834
Postage	-	-	-	-	-
Phone	-	-	-	-	-
Staff Development	2,673	-	-	-	2,673
Software	3,001	-	-	-	3,001
Dues, Membership, Registration	145	-	-	-	145
Marketing & Publication	626	-	-	-	626
Rentals	100	-	-	-	100
Bank Service Charges	765	398	113	-	1,276
Service Fees	201	-	-	-	201
Insurance	-	-	-	-	-
Legal Fees	246	-	-	-	246
Catering & Event Meals	-	-	-	-	-
Service Contracts	-	-	-	-	-
Bad Debt Expense	-	-	-	-	-
Equipment	-	-	-	-	-
Subgrantee	-	-	-	-	-
Commission					
Per Diems	160	-	-	-	160
Travel	314	-	-	-	314
Catering	6	-	-	-	6
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Bus Tour	7	-	-	-	7
Miscellaneous	169	-	248	-	417
Total Current	<u>99,109</u>	<u>2,519</u>	<u>419</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>102,142</u>
Debt Service					
Copier Lease Payment	755	-	-	-	755
Total Debt Service	<u>755</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>755</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>99,864</u>	<u>2,519</u>	<u>419</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>102,897</u>
Net Changes in Fund Balances	(64,615)	3,922	77	(95)	(60,711)
Fund Balances, July 1, 2023	<u>990,503</u>	<u>3,003,964</u>	<u>1,007,828</u>	<u>81,208</u>	<u>5,083,503</u>
Fund Balances as of April, 2023	<u>\$ 925,888</u>	<u>\$ 3,007,886</u>	<u>\$ 1,007,905</u>	<u>\$ 81,113</u>	<u>\$ 5,022,792</u>

**Region Nine Development Commission
Board Payment Listing
July, 2023**

Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
116057	07/10/2023	GMS	717.50	Monthly & Annual License Fees for Accounting Software
116058	07/10/2023	Spirited Journeys LLC	1,035.00	USDA & MDA Grant Work- 11.50 hours x \$90 - 6.6.23 to 6.27.23
116059	07/10/2023	Xcel Energy	66.90	Electric Utility - 5/16/23 to 6/17/23
116060	07/10/2023	Lime Valley Advertising Inc	86.25	Website Programming Services - 4/6 Critical Error Message, disable plugin
116061	07/10/2023	Headwaters Regional Development Commission	580.00	All RDC's MADO Strategic Planning Session with Denae Alamano & Lunch - R9 Share
116062	07/10/2023	Living Earth Center	2,708.90	June 2023 USDA NRCS Related Services
116063	07/10/2023	Nielsen, Robert	154.60	Mileage & Per Diem for 6/21 & 5/3.
116064	07/10/2023	Faribault County Register	12.00	Annual Meeting Publication - 6/19 - #06186
116065	07/10/2023	Faribault County Register	12.00	Annual Mtg Notice - 6/19
116066	07/10/2023	Boettger, Andrea S	80.00	Per diems - 6/14, 6/21
116067	07/10/2023	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	360.00	Janitorial Services - July 2023
116068	07/10/2023	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Base Contract for Copier - INV2312859
116069	07/10/2023	Spectrum	119.98	Internet Service - 6/22/23 to 7/22/23 - #0820665062323
116070	07/10/2023	Security Storage Systems	100.00	July 2023 Monthly Storage Rent
116071	07/10/2023	Internet Connections Inc	280.00	Website Hosting Annual Fee & Wordpress Upgrade - Inv 179220
116072	07/10/2023	Principal Life Insurance Company	286.99	Life Insurance - 7/15/23 to 8/14/23
116073	07/10/2023	Lake Crystal Coaches	810.60	Coach Bus for Annual Bus Tour - 6/21/23 - Inv 12872
116074	07/24/2023	Wells Fargo	0.99	Apple - iCloud 50GB Storage - 5/25 - NG
			731.19	Airbnb - Bemidji MADO (Shared) - 6/12 to 6/15 - NG
			119.88	Dropbox - Dropbox Plus Storage - 5/31 - NG
			24.47	Countryside Restaurant - Meal - 6/12 - NG
			17.01	Bar 209 - Meal - 6/14 - NG
			42.76	Holiday Stations - Fuel - 6/14 - NG
			8.03	McDonalds - Meal - 6/15 - NG
			32.79	Green Mill Bemidji - Meal - 6/12 - NG
116075	07/24/2023	Wells Fargo	50.00	League of American Bicyclists - Application Fee - 6/15 - JH
116076	07/24/2023	Wells Fargo	5.99	Hy-Vee - Cookies for Meeting - 5/31 - HB
			28.73	Walgreens - Office Supplies - 5/31 - HB
			17.86	HyVee - Cookies for Meeting - 6/6 - HB
			237.45	Amazon - 5 Recognition Plaques - 6/8 - HB
			3.77	USPS - Postage - 6/14 - HB
			335.97	Modern Garage - Traverse Repairs - 6/16 - HB
			125.50	Diamond Dust Bakery - Cupcakes for Bus Tour - 6/16 - HB
			94.98	Amazon - Office Supplies - 6/19 - HB
			26.75	HyVee - Snacks for Meeting - 6/20 - HB
116077	07/24/2023	Wells Fargo	108.60	Facebook/Meta - MBFFA Needs Assessment Q1 & Q2 - 5/31/23 - NG
			25.86	HyVee - Waseca -Le Sueur Library Engagement Refreshments - 6/14 - NG
116078	07/24/2023	Wells Fargo	15.79	Sleepy Eye Coffee Company - Lunch During Event - 5/25 - SF
116079	07/24/2023	Wells Fargo	55.45	HyVee Gas - Gas & Car Wash for Traverse - 5/30 - KB
			38.10	Don CeSar - Conference Dinner - 6/11 - KB
			1,012.48	Don CeSar - Hotel Stay 6/11 to 6/14 - 6/14 - KB
			2,350.80	The Park Catalog - Double Sided Traditional Bike Rack for SRTS Contract - 6/20 - KB (Joel)
116080	07/24/2023	Wells Fargo	399.00	Coursera Inc - Coursera Plus Subscription - 6/5 - PF
116081	07/24/2023	Wells Fargo	70.41	Kiwi Trip - Fuel for Traverse - 6/11 - AB
			8.99	Cub Foods - Cookies for Meeting - 6/14 - AB
Check Total	13,777.57			
Report Total:	13,777.57			

Finance

- New financials have replaced the bank balances and cash receipts section within the Treasurer's report. Our actual cash positions are listed within the balance sheet. The beginning fund balance figures listed as of July 1, 2023 are considered unaudited and may be subject to change – preliminary figures as of June 30, 2023 have our General Fund unreserved balance ending at \$990,503. More discussion will be provided during the Audit Update as per the board agenda.
- Work will be done to include YTD vs Budget numbers within the monthly financials as to track actual progress vs that of our budget.
- Abdo employees began working on our audit the week of August 14th. Much of the audit has been done remotely by the firm.
- Since the last board meeting on August 9th and the date this report was submitted (August 26th) there has been no update from Blue Earth County regarding the Radio Board.

Revolving Loan Fund

- Courtney Wright started as the organization's new Lending Specialist on August 21st. I have been working closely with Courtney while training her in on the position and I'm confident she'll do well in the position. She is currently working to organize client visits and bank visits focusing first Faribault, Martin, Watonwan, and Sibley counties. Courtney will be working to build a network listing within our Monday.com system to track our outreach.
- As per the financials included within the board packet:
 - RLF Cash Available to Lend = \$1,928,297
 - Active RLF Principal Outstanding = \$2,076,750
 - Loans in Default/Delinquent = \$53,747

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- Nothing to report.

VII. Chair's Report

B. Out of State Travel Request



Out-of-State Travel Request Form

Basic Information:

Name:	Andrea Boettger
Travel Reason/Event:	NADO Annual Training Conference
Travel Destination:	Cleveland, OH
Date of Departure:	Tuesday, November 7, 2023
Date of Return:	Saturday, November 11, 2023
Funding Source:	

Anticipated Costs:

	Departure Airport			Arrival Airport			Cost
Airfare (Roundtrip)	MSP		to	CLE			\$ 477.80
	Description						Cost
Registration							
	Total Nights			\$ Per Night			Cost
Lodging	4		x	\$ 209.00		=	\$ 836.00
	Total Days			\$ Per Diem			Cost
Meals/PerDiem	4.00		x	\$ 75		=	\$ 300.00
	Total Miles			\$ Per Mile			Cost
Mileage	188.00		x	\$ 0.655		=	\$ 123.14
	Description						Cost
Other							
	Description						Cost
Other							
Total Anticipated Cost of Out-of-State Travel Request							\$ 1,675.37

Employee Signature: _____ Date _____

Executive Director Signature: _____ Date _____

Justification:

Per Region Nine Development Commission Personnel Policy Manual:

6.5 OUT OF STATE TRAVEL

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VII. Chair's Report

B. Out of State Travel Request



Out-of-State Travel Request Form

Basic Information:

Name:	Nicole Griensewic
Travel Reason/Event:	NADO Annual Training Conference
Travel Destination:	Cleveland, OH
Date of Departure:	Tuesday, November 7, 2023
Date of Return:	Saturday, November 11, 2023
Funding Source:	

Anticipated Costs:

	Departure Airport		Arrival Airport		Cost
Airfare (Roundtrip)	MSP	to	CLE		\$ 527.80
	Description				Cost
Registration					
	Total Nights		\$ Per Night		Cost
Lodging	4	x	\$ 209.00	=	\$ 836.00
	Total Days		\$ Per Diem		Cost
Meals/PerDiem	4.00	x	\$ 75	=	\$ 300.00
	Total Miles		\$ Per Mile		Cost
Mileage	156.00	x	\$ 0.655	=	\$ 102.18
	Description				Cost
Other					
	Description				Cost
Other					
Total Anticipated Cost of Out-of-State Travel Request					\$ 1,714.89

Employee Signature: _____ Date _____

Executive Director Signature: _____ Date _____

Justification:

Per Region Nine Development Commission Personnel Policy Manual:

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Staff Updates – September 2023

Nicole Griensewic

Continuing conversations with the McKnight Foundation on how they can potentially assist MN's RDOs with DOE's grants and the technical assistance that will be needed to work with our local communities to ensure any grant applications are competitive and our municipalities are not left behind.

Chaired the Center for Transportation Studies' Executive Committee Meeting on August 17 at the U of M's McNamara Alumni Center. Sat in on trainings from the Great Plans Institute on August 18 regarding Dept. of Commerce *Solar for All* program. Presented at the Le Sueur County Board meeting on August 22. Attended the MADO Executive Director's quarterly meeting in Thief River Falls on September 11 & 12.

Continue to work with Georgetown's School of Business on their *Impact Scholars* program. Creating plans on how the graduate students could assist Faribault County and RNDC-led Strategic & Economic Development plan's data gathering & analysis.

Organized and hosted a full day training for NADO staff on August 31st. NADO approached RNDC if they could bring their team as part of their professional development to better understand the work of Economic Development Districts. Staff from RNDC and our partners presented to six members of the NADO team on the work we do throughout the region including topics such as local foods and the Grower's Network, how we support our manufacturing sector and its workforce needs, and regional initiatives on retaining talent to support our regional economy. Tours included the Community Farm, Key City Bike and the Wine Cat, an RLF client success story. Partners highlighted during the day included, Living Earth Center, CEDA, GAC, Waseca County, Center of Engineering Excellence and others. The day was a complete success with rave reviews and positive media coverage including a KEYC segment and an article in the *Free Press*.

The Letter of Intent request was released in late August for applicants to the State Competitiveness Fund from the Dept. of Commerce. I have asked Paola and Samuel to take the lead in responding to the LOI.

Coordinated with former DOC Commissioner and Humphrey School graduate professor Steve Kelley regarding his Energy Policy Course. RNDC is drafting proposals for the communities of Comfrey and New Ulm for potential Capstone projects with graduate student groups.

After filling the Loan Specialist position, the remaining staff vacancy is for the Community Development Director. Directors have decided to continue delaying filling the position.

Heather Bartelt

Heather attended the Regional Economic Development Alliance (REDA) meeting on August 9th.

Heather has been working alongside Kristian at redistributing award dollars to businesses who were unable to have their projects move forward.

Heather assisted in the behind the scenes planning of the August 31st NADO Site Visit.

Alejandra Bejarano

Alejandra is leading the annual update to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) presented in the Annual Performance Report. As part of this process, Alejandra is working with Mercedes and Nate to share a survey to collect feedback with commissioners and external partners. A stakeholder engagement event will also take place on September 13th at 11:30 am at Minnesota State University, where youth residents will participate to share feedback on regional priorities and challenges. Beyond engagement, Alejandra is working on collecting and analyzing data for the APR.

Alejandra presented at the National Career Development Association's (NCDA) Conference on the workforce development task force around international talent employment. The presentation sparked a lot of interest among participants who inquired about RDO's in their respective regions and states and how to get involved with them.

The CED committee convened on August 22nd, where Brigid Tuck, Senior economic impact analyst with the University of Minnesota Extension provided insights into her work, research, and University of Minnesota Extension work and past collaborations with R9DC. Commissioners expressed an interest in hosting a future CED committee meeting around the new cannabis legislation.

Alejandra attended DEED's statewide tour hosted by Deputy Commissioner for Workforce Development Marc Majors attended by business and workforce leaders across the region. Alejandra had an opportunity to connect with Deputy Commissioner Majors and will convene with him over the next couple of weeks.

Alejandra drafted a job description that was published in August for an economic development intern. Applications have been reviewed and a candidate was selected.

Joel and Alejandra attended COPAL's Resource Fair in Madelia, where they shared about R9DC's programming, RLF, Safe Routes to School Program and the Informal Economy Project taking place with HACER and the University of Minnesota Extension.

Alejandra recently joined the Conference Committee for the Economic Development Association of MN (EDAM) that helps organize conferences and select speakers and locations.

Kristian Braekkan

Kristian presented to Faribault County Board with Mercedes Sempe on August 15. Kristian and Mercedes proposed that RNDC would prepare a *Strategic Economic Development Plan* for the county. A proposal was submitted to the county on September 5th. Kristian has also assisted Waseca County with a federal EDA application through revisions/amendments to the 2022 feasibility study. He has also assisted the county with workforce evaluations for their Department of Defense grant with St. Cloud State for machining. Finally, Kristian has worked on preparing for a needs and feasibility study with New Ulm Business Resource and Innovation Center – a grant awarded to NUBRIC and RNDC in August.

Sabri Fair

Sabri has moved to the next round of applying for funding from the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) to conduct a regional food recovery plan. The goal of the plan is to help food shelves, pantries, and banks across the region more successfully capture excess food from distribution centers, food processors, and grocery stores so that it can feed people instead of going into landfills.

Sabri was also successful in organizing energy audits for Comfrey Businesses, Institutions, and residents through three different organizations RETAP, MN Chamber of Commerce, and MNVAC. With grant funding and the partnerships created we hope to conduct 15 energy audits across the community.

Sabri has been organizing a farmland transition event in Montgomery to help retiring farmers connect with beginning farmers and make sure they all have the financial and technical resources necessary to achieve their farm transition goals. The event will feature speakers from UMN Extension, NRCS, SCC, and Compeer Financial.

Sabri has begun helping two local farmers with applications for the AGRI- Value Added grant through the MDA to help one of them purchase a dehydrator to help them preserve products and sell them in the non-growing season. The other farmers are looking to increase their freezer capacity to be able to store more bison meat onsite and increase their annual production. He will continue to reach out to more farmers across the region to apply for this grant opportunity.

Paola Ferrario

Paola presented the "Greenovation" project proposal to the national ERC Fellow committee during the fellowship program's second round of interviews. Region Nine unfortunately did not secure the fellowship. Collaborating with Sam, she has been involved with the

coordination of the BDO Zone program. She has been facilitating the coordination of B2B, "Business to Business" meetings for an upcoming German delegation focused on Smart Grid and Energy Storage. The program being hosted by the German American Chamber of Commerce- Midwest. Paola has been participating in calls, engaging in discussions with the McKnight Foundation, and liaising with the German American Chamber to further discuss the potential for attracting anaerobic digesters. Paola has been coordinating with Commissioner Boettger to have a call with Scott McMahon, Executive Director of the Greater MN Partnership to have present to the Legislative and Communications Committee on outcomes from the past state legislative session. Paola has also participated in the *Rural-Urban Exchange* roundtable on bridging the rural-urban communication gap. She has also participated in a training titled, "*Building a Bigger Table: An Organizing and Advocacy Learning Lab*".

Nathan George

Nathan has been working to finish up the Annual Report. He is waiting for the results of the recent audit to add to the report. Nathan has been summarizing the projects that occurred during the last fiscal year.

Nathan has also been working to improve the Board Portal based on the comments from the last Board of Directors meeting. He has updated the layout of the main portal page to bring the most accessed information to the top. He is working to improve the navigation of the log in screens and looking for a calendar plugin that will allow commissioners to add meetings to their calendars.

He spent a week attending a virtual marketing summit. The summit was part of the Certified Fund-Raising Executive Program. Nathan also participated in a *Rural-Urban Exchange* roundtable that focused on bridging the communication gap between rural and urban residents. He attended an RLF marketing webinar. These learning opportunities will help him as we prepare for future marketing campaigns.

Nate helped prepare for the NADO visit by creating a presentation summarizing the work of RNDC. He also prepared a presentation with Nicole and Kristian that will be used for county board presentations.

Joel Hanif

Joel attended MnDOT Highway Capital Investment Plan outreach meetings in Brown and Watonwan Counties with MnDOT District 7 staff on August 15. County commissioners were informed of projects slated for construction in the next 10 years both at the regional level and at the local level.

Joel received final approval of the Madelia Safe Routes to School Plan from the MnDOT Office of Transit and Active Transportation. As one final piece of outreach for that plan and RNDC SRTS planning, Joel attended the COPAL back-to-school event in Madelia with Alejandra where they set up an informational table and answered attendees' questions about RNDC's work. Joel also began work on the Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Schools SRTS plan. That work has consisted primarily of collaborating with local project leaders to build a full steering committee for the plan.

Joel and co-chair Tony Klaers of Headwaters Regional Development Commission organized and facilitated the quarterly RDO transportation planners meeting in Fergus Falls on August 23 and 24. This peer exchange allowed new and veteran transportation planners around the state to learn from one another and from various presenters on topics like Safe Routes to School, the Carbon Reduction Program, PROTECT funding, and research conducted by the University of Minnesota and MnDOT.

Joel and Nicole attended the VINE AARP Age-Friendly Communities kickoff meeting. This was mostly an informational meeting where regional stakeholders were informed of goals on Mankato and North Mankato becoming an age-friendly community. Year 1 will consist of conducting a needs assessment based on stakeholder feedback; Region Nine's part in this will likely revolve around data analysis and transportation work.

Joel participated in the MAPO TAC meeting on August 17. In this meeting, he volunteered to serve on a subcommittee that reviews the new urbanized area boundaries based on the 2020 census and determines whether or not these new boundaries are appropriate for the metropolitan area. The first meeting for this subcommittee took place on September 7.

Corree Johnson

Working with Kristian Braekkan, Corree has completed a feasibility study for Neighbor's Meat LLC, part of the MBFFA grant that ended in July, and began creating a report for the contractual work for SMIF's assessments of REV and PI communities.

She also has begun generating a directory of regional community and economic development stakeholders. This directory will allow RNDC to have an up-to-date list of contacts in the region, track involvement/contact with stakeholders, and prioritize outreach efforts. Additionally, she is helping with creating flyers, writing letters of support, and other miscellaneous tasks.

Corree continues to monitor the RNDC website to improve SEO, navigation, and update site content as needed.

Sam Sharp

Samuel and Paola have been working on a Letter of Intent addressed to the MN DOC's State Competitiveness Funds designed to support the capacity for RDO's and their continued work with rural communities.

Samuel connected with the City of Kiester to support housing needs and will be connecting them to DEED and potential funding through the Small Cities Development Program. Samuel will join a discussion with the Southwest MN Housing Partnership to support the City of Comfrey and their need for residential housing development. Samuel will be assisting Saint Peter in developing an application to pursue funding through the EDA to redevelop Pine Street – identified as an LMI census tract – and an important conduit for their industrial workforce.

Samuel, alongside Paola, has continued his work on the BDO Zone project, intended to generate a region-wide assessment rating to attract global biofuels investment and development. Through this, Samuel will be engaged with GreaterMSP and their recently announced sustainable aviation fuel initiative, where RNDC was invited to participate in their kickoff partnership conversation in late September. Samuel has furthered RNDC's involvement with SolSmart and will be working to upgrade the current placement from Silver to Gold and/or Platinum. Samuel will be supporting communities within the region to pursue their own placements within the SolSmart program as well.

Samuel and Sabri will continue their work on the Climate Resilience Plan for Comfrey and will conduct community outreach throughout the fall. Samuel will be working with the Humphrey School of Public Affairs to develop potential Capstone projects for STEM students to work on this fall – featuring the communities of New Ulm and Comfrey.

Terms & Abbreviations

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