



Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 4:30 p.m.



3 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 310, Mankato, Minnesota

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

November 8, 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>	4:35	10	
A. Audit Update			
B. Fund Reclassification Request			<u>Action</u>
VII. Chair's Report – <i>Chair Laven</i>	5:05		
VIII. Executive Director's Report – <i>Kristian Braekkan</i>	5:20		
A. Resolution 2023 – 10 – Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan – <i>Joel Hanif</i>		11	<u>Action</u>
B. MedTech Connect plan update			
IX. Other Business	5:50		
A. Commissioner Updates			
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 BUSINESSS

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 September 30, 2023

	<u>General</u>	<u>Legacy RLF</u>	<u>CARES Act RLF</u>	<u>Auto Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assets					
Cash	\$ 474,494	\$ 1,878,024	\$ 102,671	\$ 81,113	\$ 2,536,302
Receivables					
Taxes - Current	308,545	-	-	-	308,545
General Accounts Receivable	26,068	-	-	-	26,068
Grants Accounts Receivable	311,516	-	-	-	311,516
Revolving Loan - Current	-	139,298	116,982	-	256,280
Revolving Loan - Long-Term	-	1,045,555	737,505	-	1,783,060
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>1,155,932</u>	<u>3,087,624</u>	<u>986,158</u>	<u>81,113</u>	<u>5,310,827</u>
Liabilities					
Accounts Payable	39,744	-	-	-	39,744
Due to Other Funds	(62,908)	83,660	(21,670)	590	(328)
Accrued Wages Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Accrued Payroll Liabilities	18,141	-	-	-	18,141
Unearned Revenue	104	-	-	-	104
Accrued Leave Payable	33,000	-	-	-	33,000
Variance to be Reconciled	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	<u>28,081</u>	<u>83,660</u>	<u>(21,670)</u>	<u>590</u>	<u>90,661</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	-	3,003,964	981,872	-	3,985,836
Restricted Fund Balance	-	-	-	80,523	80,523
Unassigned	798,198	-	25,956	-	824,154
Total Fund Balances	<u>819,306</u>	<u>3,003,964</u>	<u>1,007,828</u>	<u>80,523</u>	<u>4,911,621</u>
Total Liabilities, Deferred Inflows of Resources and Fund Balances	<u>1,155,932</u>	<u>3,087,624</u>	<u>986,158</u>	<u>81,113</u>	<u>5,310,827</u>
	-	-	-	-	-

Region Nine Development Commission
Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes
As of September 30, 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	13,016	-	-	-	13,016
Other Federal Grants	40,065	-	-	-	40,065
Transportation					
Transportation - MnDOT Contract	33,082	-	-	-	33,082
Transportation - Other	-	-	-	-	-
Other Grants	101,557	-	-	-	101,557
Contract Revenue	7,396	-	-	-	7,396
Deposit Interest & Dividends	3,761	4,953	626	-	9,340
Loan Interest Earned	-	14,923	2,128	-	17,051
Transfer Funds	(4,537)	6,547	(2,010)	-	-
Other Revenue	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenues	<u>194,340</u>	<u>26,423</u>	<u>744</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>221,507</u>
Expenses					
Salary & Wages	206,932	15,395	-	-	222,327
Fringe Benefits	49,570	4,098	-	-	53,668
Indirect Costs	59,197	4,495	127	-	63,819
Consultants	13,297	-	-	-	13,297
Staff Travel	5,268	-	-	381	5,649
Supplies	1,749	26	-	-	1,775
Copying	834	-	-	-	834
Postage	25	-	-	-	25
Phone	366	-	-	-	366
Staff Development	3,980	843	-	-	4,823
Software	5,327	280	-	-	5,607
Dues, Membership, Registration	4,426	-	-	-	4,426
Marketing & Publication	5,120	-	-	-	5,120
Rentals	100	-	-	259	359
Bank Service Charges	1,547	1,161	369	-	3,077
Service Fees	304	-	-	-	304
Insurance	-	-	-	-	-
Legal Fees	390	125	-	-	515
Catering & Event Meals	830	-	-	-	830
Equipment	2,681	-	-	-	2,681
Commission					
Per Diems	320	-	-	-	320
Travel	1,696	-	-	-	1,696
Catering	6	-	-	-	6
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Bus Tour	7	-	-	-	7
Miscellaneous	1,391	-	248	45	1,684
Total Current	<u>366,251</u>	<u>26,423</u>	<u>744</u>	<u>685</u>	<u>394,103</u>
Debt Service					
Copier Lease Payment	1,509	-	-	-	1,509
Total Debt Service	<u>1,509</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,509</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>367,760</u>	<u>26,423</u>	<u>744</u>	<u>685</u>	<u>395,612</u>
Net Changes in Fund Balances	(173,420)	-	-	(685)	(174,105)
Fund Balances, July 1, 2023	<u>992,726</u>	<u>3,003,964</u>	<u>1,007,828</u>	<u>81,208</u>	<u>5,085,726</u>
Fund Balances as of September 30, 2023	<u>\$ 819,306</u>	<u>\$ 3,003,964</u>	<u>\$ 1,007,828</u>	<u>\$ 80,523</u>	<u>\$ 4,911,621</u>

**Region Nine Development Commission
Board Payment Listing
September 2023**

Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
116122	09/08/2023	Security Storage Systems	100.00	September Offsite Storage Rent
116123	09/08/2023	Creative Ad Solutions Inc	21.15	Replacement Logo mug for Sabri
116124	09/08/2023	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Copier/Printing - Base Contract Rate - 8/27 to 9/26 - INV2352188
116125	09/08/2023	Spectrum	119.98	Interent Service - 8/23 to 9/22 - INV0820665082323
116126	09/08/2023	Milbrath, Mary	50.48	Mileage & Per Diem for Delinators Presentation on 8/2/23
116127	09/08/2023	Consolidated Communications	1,430.23	Final Charges/Cleanup for Old Phone Line Service
116128	09/08/2023	Xcel Energy	67.67	Electric Utility Charges - 7/17 to 8/15
116129	09/08/2023	Spirited Journeys LLC	1,575.00	USDA NRCS Grant Consultant - August 2023 Services
116130	09/08/2023	GHG Corporation	85.00	Teamkeeper Clock System Services - September 2023
116131	09/08/2023	Aerial Imagery Media	2,800.00	Photos for Local Food Week Farmers & Restaurants - 2 days @ \$1,400 per
116132	09/08/2023	GMS	4,268.38	RLSS & GMS Annual Costs, Monthly Billing, RLS Symposium Registration for Courtney
116133	09/08/2023	Living Earth Center	3,602.35	USDA NRCA Consultant - August 2023 Services
116134	09/08/2023	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	360.00	September Janitorial Services - INV 16273
116135	09/08/2023	Neubau Holdings LLC	3,115.00	September Office Rent
116136	09/08/2023	Glidden, Elroy	78.60	Mileage for 8/22
116137	09/08/2023	Schlueter, Scott A	34.06	Mileage for CEDS Meeting - 8/22/23
116138	09/08/2023	Pfeil, Mike	85.85	Per Diem & Mileage - CEDS Meeting - 8/22
116139	09/08/2023	Boettger, Andrea S	618.06	8/9 Board Meeting, NADO Cleveland Plane Ticket, R9 NADO Day 8/31 Reimbursements
116140	09/08/2023	Verizon Wireless	187.42	ED Cell Phone & Tablet Phone/Internet
116141	09/08/2023	Colin Scharf	2,200.00	Consultant - NEA Our Town Grant Writing - 55 August Hours
116142	09/08/2023	GMS	327.85	RNAI GMS Accounting Software - INV 940082023
116143	09/08/2023	Brennan Properties of Minnesota	100.00	Room Rental for NADO Day - 8/31
116144	09/15/2023	Wells Fargo	799.00	Surgent CPE Renewal
116145	09/15/2023	Wells Fargo	141.79	Delta Airlines - Courtney RLSS Conference 9/13 - 8/10 - KB
			5.00	Under the Sun Herbs - USDA Grant - 7/22 - SF
			10.50	Sleepy Bison Acres - USDA Grant Supplies - 7/22 - SF
			18.00	Stone Hearth Farm - USDA Grant Supplies - 8/22 - SF
			21.00	Leuer Gardens - USDA Grant Supplies - 7/22 - SF
			3.44	Upbeet Acres - USDA Grant Supplies - 8/22 - SF
			4.00	Cedar Crate Farm - USDA Grant Supplies - 7/22 - SF
			4.00	Cedar Crate Farms - USDA Grant Supplies - 7/22 - SF
			5.00	Mood Bees Honey - USDA Grant Supplies - 7/22 - SF
			41.48	HyVee Fuel - Traverse Fuel - 7/27 - SF
			89.75	Insty Prints - Under the Sun Stickers for MBFFA - 7/25 - SF
			34.78	SPitz NE - Dinner for RFBC Meeting Sam & Sabri - 8/16 - SF
			21.37	UP Coffee Roasters - Sabri Breakfast for RFBC Kickoff - 8/17 - SF
			339.80	Delta Hotels by Marriott - RFBC Kickoff Hotel Stay for Sabri - 8/16 - SF
116146	09/15/2023	Wells Fargo	100.00	U of M - 2023 Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference 9/14 - 8/2 - AB
116147	09/15/2023	Wells Fargo	44.00	First Advantage - Background Check C Wright 7/28 - HB
116148	09/15/2023	Wells Fargo	17.25	Zoom - Monthly Service 7/30 - HB
			1,350.00	NADO - ATC Conference Registration for Griensewic & Boettger - 7/31 - HB
			15.99	Hilton Cleveland - Hotel Booking Fee for November Stay -
			104.00	Pita Pit - Staff Development Lunch for Strength Finders - 8/4 - HB
			121.09	Picklebarn - Staff Wellness Activity - 8/4 - HB
			5.58	USPS - Postage - 8/7 - HB
			215.78	eDreams Prime - Thief River Falls Flight for NG on 9/10 & 12 - 8/8 - HB
			169.05	Pita Pit - NADO Lunch at R9 - 8/16 - HB
			169.67	Amazon - 3 Award Plaques, 2 Foil Certificates - 8/8 - HB
			19.10	USPS - Postage - 8/21 - HB
			0.99	Apple - Cloud Storage - 7/25 - NG
			57.85	Papa George Mankato - Nicole, Sabri, Sam Lunch - 8/11 - NG
			25.70	Buffalo Wild Wings Minneapolis - CTS Transportation - 8/17 - NG
116149	09/15/2023	Wells Fargo	1.20	Facebook - Event Focus Group for Waseca-Lesueur 6/29 - 7/31 - NateG
116150	09/15/2023	Wells Fargo	22.34	HyVee Fuel - Traverse Fuel - 8/2 - NateG
			40.57	HyVee Fuel - Traverse Fuel - 8/11 - NateG
			26.56	Uber - Accidental Charge Aaron Pacheco to Reimburse - 8/7 - PF
116151	09/15/2023	Wells Fargo	80.25	The Gage Chicago - Paola F & Andrea B Lunch - 8/21 - PF
			51.19	HyVee Fuel - Traverse Fuel - 7/25 - JH
Check Total	25,781.40			
Report Total:	25,781.40			

Finance

- Work is being done to organize another Budget & Personnel committee for late November or early December. Items that will likely be on the agenda include adopting a framework for the committee's use, code of conduct policy, personnel policy, succession plans, and likely other items if time may permit. The organization currently does not have a code of conduct policy or succession plans and our personnel policy is in need of updating.
- A request will be brought to the board to reclassify existing committed fund balances to that of the general fund or to expand their usage. The largest of these requests will to reclass the Auto Fund to an Capital Equipment Fund to allow for these funds to be used for other equipment purchases outside of vehicles.
- Work will begin in November on a revised budget for the organization. This budget will give us a more accurate measure of year end forecasts given that we'll have a better idea of staffing levels and grant income. The plan will be to present this to the commission either in January or February.
- R9 will be submitting an application to the USDA for their Intermediary Lending Program. The program allows organizations with established revolving loan funds to receive up to \$1,000,000 to then reloan out within the community. The uses for the funding go beyond what can normally be offered as part of our current RLF and would be of great value if our application is accepted. This funding would need to be paid back by R9 to the USDA over the course of no greater than 30 years at a 1% interest rate.

Revolving Loan Fund

- RLF
 - Current Principal Outstanding = \$2,093,087
 - Available to Lend = \$1,735,818

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- No information to report.



RESOLUTION

Region Nine Development Commission
2023 - 10

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE 2022 – REGION NINE LOCAL HUMAN SERVICES TRANSIT COORDINATION PLAN

Whereas, Region Nine Development Commission completed a Local Human Services Transit Coordination Plan; and

Whereas, A locally-developed and adopted plan is a requirement for transit providers to secure federal 5310 funds.

Now, therefore be it resolved that the Region Nine Development Commissioner adopts the 2022 Region Nine Local Human Services-Transit Coordination Plan.

Dated this 8th day of November, 2023.

Signed:

Mike Laven, Chair

Jim Branstad, Secretary

Staff Updates – November 2023

Heather Bartelt

Heather has continued to organize New Commissioner Orientations for those who were approved at the October 11th Full Commission Meeting.

As the Wellness Coordinator for RNDC, Heather attended the SCSC Fall Wellness Conference on October 25th.

Heather has been continuing the process of creating a comprehensive database of all elected officials.

Heather attended the REDA Meeting on November 8th.

Alejandra Bejarano

Alejandra, with support from other staff members, is working on completing the annual update to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) presented in the Annual Performance Report.

Alejandra continues to lead the workforce task force focused on international talent retention and attraction. As part of this work, Alejandra presented at an event organized by "Expand the Toolbox" in the Twin Cities to regional and statewide contractors, human resource specialists, and employers on hiring and recruiting challenges and how to employ and hire international talent. Alejandra is also working with Workforce Strategy Consultants at DEED to host a "Workforce Wednesday" session on international talent recruitment strategies. "Workforce Wednesday" is a program led by DEED that focuses on current workforce challenges and solutions, open to employers and organizations from across the state.

Alejandra has connected with other economic development practitioners from across the state to learn more about the Small Cities Development Program through DEED and determine how to best utilize it in our region.

On October 19th, the CED committee convened to discuss priorities, challenges, and goals for the region as part of the annual update to the CEDS.

Alejandra continues to connect with local communities to identify challenges and priorities around broadband. As part of these conversations, Alejandra has connected with staff from the Minnesota Office of Broadband, regional providers, as well as members of broadband county commissions.

Alejandra will be a speaker at this year's World Town Planning Day Conference organized by the American Planning Association (APA), the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) and APA's International Division.

Kristian Braekkan

Kristian has been working on the needs assessment for the New Ulm Robotics and Automation Plan – the first of three deliverables for the ongoing EDA grant that RNDC was awarded in partnership with NUBRIC. This portion of the plan is scheduled for completion by the end of the calendar year and is conducted with the assistance of Mireille and Nate. He has also been conducting an economic assessment for the Faribault County strategic economic development plan with support from Maggie Ahern – RNDC's impact scholar from Georgetown University, and assisted Mercedes with planning for surveys and community engagement sessions for said plan. Kristian also met with Waseca County to amend the feasibility study for the workforce development center to account for the new location, revised financial feasibility, and to implement descriptions of additional programming – most notably the Department of Defense funded ACE's programming for machining.

Sabri Fair

Sabri was successful with his grant application to the Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. This grant will provide \$91,000 over two years to purchase food from local farmers and distribute it for free to local food shelves and HeadStart Programs throughout the region. He is still awaiting the final contracts.

Sabri has been doing outreach to childcare centers in the region to make them aware of the Farm to Early Care grants available through the Minnesota Department of AG. Thus far he has gotten three Head Start locations to submit applications.

Sabri has been working with the St. Peter Area Food Shelf to apply for a grant from the Department of Human Services. This grant will allow them to renovate their space, so it is more welcoming and energy efficient to better meet the needs of their community. The grant will cover materials and labor and save the organization money on utility bills making them more financially sound.

Sabri has started outreach for the Regional Food System Plan. He has been at local farmers' markets and community events throughout the region learning about people's understanding of the regional food system and what would help them buy more regionally grown, produced, and processed foods. As part of this he will be hosting a community conversation about opportunities for Halal meat processing in the region in partnership with Wellshare and a local mosque.

Sabri has continued work with local businesses who are looking for help with applying for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) which will provide 50% grants for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects at their rural, and agricultural businesses.

Paola Ferrario

Enjoyed time off at the time this report was completed.

Nathan George

This month, Nathan has been working with Courtney on marketing initiatives for the Revolving Loan Fund Program. This will include print materials, social media campaigns, site visits, and other channels that are to be decided. This is an important project for 2023-2024 as RNDC works to get loans out to the communities of Region Nine.

He is working with Alejandra on the 2023 Annual Performance Report (APR). The APR is a yearly document that assesses the priorities of the region as it relates to the CEDS. The APR team has been conducting surveys and focus groups to gather community information. Commissioners and local stakeholders have been sent the survey and results have been coming in. Nathan's role has been proofing and editing the surveys, sending them to appropriate recipients, and designing the promotional materials.

Nathan has also been in the initial phases of conducting an informal needs assessment for arts and culture initiatives as they relate to the CEDS. He has put together a small team to help conduct one-on-one discussions, create and conduct a survey, and strategize as RNDC pursues potential funding. The goal is to identify possible art and culture opportunities for areas outside of Mankato.

Nathan has also created designs for several projects including the Region Nine Grower's Network, MBFFA, and Community Energy Futures. The above projects are in addition to daily tasks.

Mireille Ghassan

Continued working with Alejandra on editing and updating the employer and student surveys for the workforce taskforce. Had the taskforce meeting on October 17, where we went over the student survey and received valuable feedback. On October 26, we went over the employer survey where we also received valuable feedback. Surveys will be completed and ready to deploy by the end of October.

Mireille connected with Kristian to learn about what he is currently working on. Will be joining him on the NUBRIC project. Currently, Mireille is collecting demographic data for 5 counties (Brown, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley & Watonwan) specifically focusing on economic distress, socioeconomic trends, and demographic trends over the past 5 years.

Mireille attended the "Students building homes for low-income families" discussion meeting on October 23. Meeting covered Minnesota economic development housing challenge program, provided examples of the program in action, and provided an overview of

Minnesota Housing Single Family Development Funds. Mireille collected notes and learned a lot of the idea of creating tiny homes for low-income families.

Joel Hanif

Joel has been meeting with multiple groups about active transportation opportunities. On October 16, he participated in an active transportation summit debriefing discussion with representatives from Greater Mankato Bike Walk Advocates, SHIP, and Bike Walk St. Peter. Discussion included things that went well, things that needed improvement, and preliminary planning for another summit next year. Joel has also discussed pursuing MnDOT's active transportation technical assistance opportunity with this same group for some regional scale active transportation planning.

Joel also met with the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce and SHIP to discuss future trail projects in the area. There is interest in possibly pursuing the aforementioned MnDOT active transportation technical assistance opportunity, but this group is also considering other opportunities (potentially Safe Routes/Transportation Alternatives or DNR trails funding).

Joel held the kickoff meeting for Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Safe Routes to School planning in Waterville on October 31. There, he gave an overview of SRTS, the roles and responsibilities of both RNDC and the local SRTS team throughout the year, and what deliverables would be produced by the end of the planning process. There was also discussion on adding additional team members from stakeholder groups not present at the meeting.

Joel also held a Region Nine TAC meeting on November 3 at Bridge Plaza. There, he introduced new TAC members, presented some information on current funding opportunities, and the group heard local updates from representatives from throughout the region.

Aaron Pacheco

Aaron is building several datasets to include businesses in varying size through different geographic limits in the Region. These datasets are to aid in two grant proposals and a business environment assessment surrounding Sibley County. The data will be divided into two scopes. The first will look at labor force relationships to examine how manufacturing of different types relates to employment and firm size. The second will look at clustering business of similar industries as part of a strategic economic development plan. The scale of both analyses will vary to display not only variability within the region, but given the proximity of Sibley County to the Twin Cities greater metro area, it is important to understand in what aspects local industry is either dependent or independent of the trade relationships across contrasting geographies.

Along with the above business analysis, Aaron has also shared some smaller analyses with regional partners including Minnesota State University, Mankato. He had examined national

climate data and overlaid it with housing prices and migration statistics to help visualize how southern Minnesota fares in the United States which has experienced high mobility over the last few years. The results showed that the issue of population decline in most counties has persisted despite relatively low climate risks. This is compared to areas like northern Minnesota, which has seen a relative population increase along with an increase in wildfire events (and overall risk). This is on par with a national trend, where rural corn belt communities continue to decline while areas with increased flooding and hurricane risks like eastern Texas and Florida, or increased fire risk like northern California, southern Oregon, and central Colorado, continue to see steady growth.

Mercedes Sempe

Mercedes Sempe has been working with Alejandra Bejarano on the APR project. As part of her support, Mercedes met with Alejandra to participate in the data analysis process after the APR Youth Meeting event she helped organize. Mercedes sent a report with the analysis of the data obtained during the meeting for Alejandra and Mireille to revise.

Also as part of her work with Alejandra, Mercedes has been part of the workforce project. The workforce group, aimed at developing better ways to connect employers with students and prospective workers, met on Oct 17 to discuss two surveys: one for international students and one for employers. Mercedes actively participated in the discussion, and added suggestions to the survey. A follow-up meeting was held on Oct 26 to fine-tune the questions. Mercedes has also been attending the planners' meetings, held on Thursdays, and taking down notes for those who couldn't attend.

On Oct 12, Mercedes accompanied Paola Ferrario to Montgomery. The objective of the trip was to promote R9 and re-establish links with the city. There, Mercedes was introduced to two city officials and discussed with them ways in which R9 can support them in their work in Montgomery.

As part of a project led by Kristian Braekkan, Mercedes developed a survey to be distributed among residents of Faribault County. She also contacted the local EDA to begin outreach and organize focus groups at local high schools.

Mercedes is also working with Kristian on a RUBRICS project, which requires background research to prepare a feasibility study.

Sam Sharp

Sam has been working with Paola to develop an application to the MN Department of Commerce's State Competitiveness Funds. These funds are designed to support RDO's and fund Samuel's time and capacity to continue working on clean energy initiatives. Samuel has been continuing his work on the BDO Zone assessment, bringing in several key stakeholders and regional experts to support the advancement of this initiative. The technical phase of the BDO Zone assessment is expected to conclude in the coming months, where Samuel will help facilitate the transition into the marketing and promotional phase.

Samuel and Paola will be leveraging the results from the BDO Zone assessment to pursue funding through the DOT's Fueling Aviation's Sustainable Transition (FAST) Grant Program. This funding is intended to support the growth and development of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) within the region, that could have statewide implications through collaboration with GreaterMSP, Delta Airlines, and North Star Aviation.

Samuel and Sabri have been continuing to develop the Comfrey Climate Resilience Plan and hosted their first Climate Committee meeting to discuss surveys, community perceptions of Comfrey, and overall needs and interests the community would like to see included within the plan. Samuel and Sabri will be rolling out the finalized community survey and will use those results to help shape the planning efforts.

Samuel attended the Brownfields and Beyond event through MN DEED to learn more about brownfields and opportunities for RNDC to get involved in the redevelopment of these sites.

Samuel will be attending NADO in Cleveland this year and will be speaking on a panel to discuss "Renewable and Resilient Energy: Solutions for Your Region" alongside other panelists in this sector. This will be an excellent opportunity for Samuel to build connections and share the ongoing work taking place within Region Nine.

Courtney Wright

Courtney met with Jessica Richards and Amanda Brewington with First Children's Finance. First Children's Finance addresses the business and finance needs of childcare by building the financial sustainability of childcare entrepreneurs, partnering with communities to preserve and grow their childcare supply, and influence state and federal systems to provide support to childcare businesses. Jessica Richards helps childcare businesses with consulting, preparing a business plan, financial assessment and improvement plans. Whereas Amanada Brewington facilitates First Children's Finance's business loans and gap financing. This partnership will be beneficial to daycare centers within Region Nine who utilize our RLF program.

On October 26th, Courtney met with the Loan Committee members to present NGSW Properties LLC (United Team Elite) loan request. United Team Elite is a customized apparel company that offers screen printing, embroidery, team apparel, business apparel, products, etc. UTE has grown rapidly over the last 9 years and are in need of expanding their building. Region Nine and Pioneer Bank funded the original purchase of the building in 2016. United Team Elite plans to hire up to 6 full-time and 3 part-time employees to support their increasing number of sales. We are thrilled to announce the Loan Committee has approved this loan request on October 26th.

Courtney attended Greater Mankato Growth's Young Professionals event: Following the Leader with Sarah Harstad. She will be attending MNDO National Veteran's Small Business Week Road Tour in New Ulm on October 30th.

On October 23rd, Courtney had a site visit to Pleasant Grove Pizza Farm in Waseca. She is planning on visiting Emma's Bakery & Eats in Arlington on November 13th.

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

Terms & Abbreviations

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