



Commission Meeting

Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.



South Central Service Cooperative | 2075 Lookout Drive, N. Mankato, 56003

CONSENT AGENDA

	<u>Time</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Action</u>
I. Call to Order	6:00		
II. Pledge of Allegiance			
III. Roll Call – Commissioner Drantell			
IV. Approval Consent Agenda		2	Action
A. January 10, 2024 Minutes		3	
B. Treasurer’s Report		5	
V. Finance Director’s Report – Ky Battern	6:10	8	
A. Budget Review & Recommendation			
VI. Chair’s Report	6:30		
A. Approval of Regional School Board Commissioner		Video to be shown	Action
B. Term as Chair			
C. Update from Vice Chair Boettger		9	
VII. North Star Promise Presentation - Saga Rydaker	6:45	10	
VIII. Executive Director’s Report – Nicole Griensewic	7:00	12	
A. St. James Energy Grant update – Sabri Fair			
B. BDO Zone ‘A’ Rating – Sam Sharp			
C. Safe Streets and Roads for All – Joel Hanif			
D. American Connection Corps – Alejandra Bejarano			
E. Plan Update: Faribault Co. and Sibley Co. – Mercedes Sempè & Kristian Braekkan			
F. NADO / D.C. Policy Recap – Commissioner Norton			
G. NADO Annual Policy Conference Recap – Nicole Griensewic			
IX. Other Business	7:45		
A. Commissioner Updates			
B. Meeting Evaluation		Handout	
X. Adjournment	8:00		Action

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Laven called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. at South Central Service Cooperative, North Mankato, MN.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sarah Berry, Andrea Boettger, Dave Borchert, Jim Branstad, Steve Cooling, Marie Dranttel, Lyle Femrite, Robert Goblirsch, Paul Harris, Stephanie Hilpipre, Katelynn Kratz, Dawn Kratzke, Mike Laven, Tom Loveall, Mary Milbrath, Bob Nielsen, Lisa Norton, Shanon Nowell, Gary Richter, Steve Rohlfig, Scott Schlueter

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Elliot Belgard, Chris Dalton, Patty O'Connor, Ayan Omar, Mike Pfeil, Phil Schafer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Holmseth, Christian Lilienthal, Michele Miller, Matt Peterson

OTHERS PRESENT: Ken Smith, Nicole Griensewic, Ky Battern, Joel Hanif, Sabri Fair, Nate George, Paola Ferrario, Mercedes Sempe, Mireille Ghassan

There was a quorum.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Norton moved to approve the agenda as presented, Femrite seconded. Motion carried.

A. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 11, 2023 MINUTES

Rohlfig moved to approve the October 11, 2023 minutes as presented, Cooling seconded. Motion carried.

V. FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

No instances of noncompliance to report. There was a material audit adjustment through internal control findings from fiscal year 2022 but was fixed in fiscal year 2023. Expenditures have increased every year for the past five years. Question from Mike Laven, why is there the defederalization of the

revolving loan funds? R9 helped change the legislation so that there is no longer reporting due “in perpetuity”.

VI. CHAIR'S REPORT

College Age Youth Commissioner, Katelynne Kratz was approved.

Norton moved to approve, Dranttel seconded. Motion carried.

Out of State Travel requests were approved. Travel request for Nicole and Andrea to attend the NADO Conference in Washington D.C. Travel request for Paola and Sam to attend NREL – Energizing Rural Communities training in Colorado. Travel request for Sabri to attend the Marbleseed Conference in Wisconsin.

Borchert moved to approve, Kratzke seconded. Motion carried.

VII. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- A.** Organization Updates (funding opportunities and upcoming events). Update from Andrea on the Childcare Innovation Program. Update from Nicole on the Empowering Small Minnesota Communities Program. The program provides capacity to small communities for development projects and infrastructure ideas to lay the groundwork for competitive proposals that are eligible for local, state, and federal investments. Nicole also mentioned an event hosted by the Center for Transportation Studies on Economic Drivers in South Central Minnesota.
- B.** Transitioning Systems, Evolving Opportunities, w. Ken Smith CEO/ President Ever-Green Energy. Nicole and Ken presented about their learning exchange to Denmark and highlighted renewable energy, opportunities, and transitioning systems. Discussion followed the presentation.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Nielsen moved to adjourn, Femrite seconded. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Mike Laven, Chair

Marie Dranttel, Secretary

Region Nine Development Commission

Balance Sheet

As of February 29, 2024

	<u>General</u>	<u>Legacy RLF</u>	<u>CARES Act RLF</u>	<u>Auto Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Assets					
Cash	\$ 81,247	\$ 2,045,421	\$ 155,106	\$ 81,113	\$ 2,362,887
Receivables					
Taxes - Current	714,271	-	-	-	714,271
General Accounts Receivable	15,010	-	-	-	15,010
Grants Accounts Receivable	331,204	-	-	-	331,204
Revolving Loan - Current	-	139,298	116,982	-	256,280
Revolving Loan - Long-Term	-	992,689	704,924	-	1,697,613
Revolving Loan - Delinquent	-	24,747	29,000	-	53,747
Capital Assets, Net of Depreciation	14,201	-	-	-	14,201
Prepays	-	-	-	-	-
Total Assets	<u>1,155,933</u>	<u>3,202,155</u>	<u>1,006,012</u>	<u>81,113</u>	<u>5,445,213</u>
Liabilities					
Accounts Payable	25,090	-	-	-	25,090
Due to Other Funds	(215,192)	198,191	(1,816)	18,817	-
Accrued Wages Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Accrued Payroll Liabilities	6,735	-	-	-	6,735
Unearned Revenue	12,742	-	-	-	12,742
Accrued Leave Payable	24,804	-	-	-	24,804
Variance to be Reconciled	-	-	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	<u>(145,821)</u>	<u>198,191</u>	<u>(1,816)</u>	<u>18,817</u>	<u>69,371</u>
Deferred Inflows of Resources					
Property Taxes Levied for Subsequent Year	640,848	-	-	-	640,848
Total Deferred Inflows of Resources	<u>640,848</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>640,848</u>
Fund Balances					
Non-Spendable - Prepaid Items	-	-	-	-	-
Restricted for Future Loans	-	3,003,964	981,872	-	3,985,836
Restricted Fund Balance	-	-	-	62,296	62,296
Unassigned	660,906	-	25,956	-	686,862
Total Fund Balances	<u>660,906</u>	<u>3,003,964</u>	<u>1,007,828</u>	<u>62,296</u>	<u>4,734,994</u>
Total Liabilities, Deferred Inflows of Resources and Fund Balances	<u>1,155,933</u>	<u>3,202,155</u>	<u>1,006,012</u>	<u>81,113</u>	<u>5,445,213</u>
	-	-	-	-	-

Region Nine Development Commission
Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes
As of February 29, 2024

	<u>General</u>	<u>Legacy RLF</u>	<u>CARES Act RLF</u>	<u>Auto Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Revenues					
Levy					
Taxes	375,161	-	-	-	375,161
Federal Grants					
EDA Planning Grant	13,016	-	-	-	13,016
Other Federal Grants	129,086	-	-	-	129,086
Transportation					
Transportation - MnDOT Contract	59,227	-	-	-	59,227
Transportation - Other	-	-	-	-	-
Other Grants	114,065	-	-	-	114,065
Contract Revenue	20,449	-	-	-	20,449
Deposit Interest & Dividends	13,443	44,342	2,228	-	60,013
Loan Interest Earned	-	38,836	7,438	-	46,274
Transfer Funds	7,545	(1,766)	(5,779)	-	-
Other Revenue	1,792	49	61	2,384	4,286
Total Revenues	<u>733,784</u>	<u>81,479</u>	<u>4,598</u>	<u>2,384</u>	<u>822,245</u>
Expenses					
Salary & Wages	481,752	47,943	253	-	529,948
Fringe Benefits	125,200	14,089	74	-	139,363
Indirect Costs	174,925	14,267	75	-	189,267
Consultants	160,549	-	-	-	160,549
Staff Travel	14,964	530	-	666	16,160
Supplies	3,492	60	-	-	3,552
Copying	1,640	-	-	-	1,640
Postage	312	-	-	-	312
Phone	1,051	-	-	-	1,051
Staff Development	7,311	843	-	-	8,154
Software	23,783	280	-	-	24,063
Dues, Membership, Registration	18,211	-	-	20	18,231
Marketing & Publication	6,550	-	-	-	6,550
Rentals	850	-	-	518	1,368
Bank Service Charges	3,367	2,236	900	-	6,503
Service Fees	2,533	126	-	-	2,659
Insurance	-	-	-	373	373
Legal Fees	4,097	1,605	3,048	-	8,750
Catering & Event Meals	2,486	-	-	-	2,486
Equipment	2,681	-	-	19,290	21,971
Commission					
Per Diems	4,038	-	-	-	4,038
Travel	6,182	-	-	-	6,182
Catering	2,061	-	-	-	2,061
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Bus Tour	983	-	-	-	983
Miscellaneous	4,256	(500)	248	429	4,433
Total Current	<u>1,062,114</u>	<u>81,479</u>	<u>4,598</u>	<u>21,296</u>	<u>1,169,487</u>
Debt Service					
Copier Lease Payment	3,490	-	-	-	3,490
Total Debt Service	<u>3,490</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,490</u>
Total Expenditures	<u>1,065,604</u>	<u>81,479</u>	<u>4,598</u>	<u>21,296</u>	<u>1,172,977</u>
Net Changes in Fund Balances	(331,820)	-	-	(18,912)	(350,732)
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 February, 2024	<u>\$ 660,906</u>	<u>\$ 3,003,964</u>	<u>\$ 1,007,828</u>	<u>\$ 62,296</u>	<u>\$ 4,734,994</u>

Region Nine Development Commission
Board Payment Listing - February 2024

Check#	Check Date	Vendor Name	Check Amount	Description
116378	02/06/2024	Johnson, Corree	6,795.00	Contracted Services - Commission Meeting, Policy Manual, NUBRIC, Dashboard, Scheduling - INV 2
116379	02/06/2024	Principal Life Insurance Company	199.24	Life Insurance Premiums - 2.15 to 3.14 - ACCT 1125885-10001
116380	02/06/2024	Lime Valley Advertising Inc	345.00	Programming Services - Website Updates - INV 24120
116381	02/06/2024	Thriveon Inc	3,565.02	Thriveon Monthly IT Services - February Billing - INV 184904
116382	02/06/2024	DVS Renewal	20.25	Traverse Tab Renewal
116383	02/06/2024	Living Earth Center	1,387.75	USDA NRCS Grant Contract Work - January 2024 - INV 1028
116384	02/06/2024	Spirited Journeys LLC	1,710.00	USDA NRCS Grant Contract Work - January 2024 - INV 686A
116385	02/06/2024	Vanderberg Cleaning Services LLC	360.00	Janitorial Service for February - INV 17100
116386	02/06/2024	Metro Sales Inc	529.60	Copier Usage & Base - 10/27 to 1/26 - INV 2453151
116387	02/06/2024	Metro Sales Inc	377.25	Contract Base Rate Charge - 1/27 to 2/26 - INV 2454154
116388	02/06/2024	GHG Corporation	75.00	Timesheet Software - February 2024 - INV 98176
116389	02/06/2024	SFM	442.00	Work Comp Quarterly Invoice - INV 3210557
116390	02/06/2024	Spectrum	119.98	Business Internet - 1.23 to 2.22 - INV 0820665012324
116391	02/06/2024	Shred-It, C/O Stericycle Inc	137.61	Shredding Services - 12.19 Visit - INV 8005890963
116392	02/06/2024	Griensewic, Nicole	681.20	Flight Reimbursement - Washington NADO Policy Trip - 3.8.24 to 3.15.24
116393	02/06/2024	Xcel Energy	51.53	Electric Utility Service - 12/16 to 1/17 - Statement 861718536
116394	02/06/2024	Norton, Lisa	47.37	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116395	02/06/2024	Kratz, Katelynn	58.76	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116396	02/06/2024	Harris, Paul	93.60	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116397	02/06/2024	Nowell, Shanon	64.12	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116398	02/06/2024	Richter, Gary	111.02	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116399	02/06/2024	Schlueter, Scott A	73.63	Per Diem & Meeting - 1/10
116400	02/06/2024	Hilpipre, Stephanie	139.61	Per Diem & Mileage - 11/27 & 1/10
116401	02/06/2024	Goblirsch, Robert	501.60	Per Diems & Mileage - 9/8, 11/3, 11/6, 11/16, 11/17, 1/10
116402	02/06/2024	Milbrath, Mary	44.02	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116403	02/06/2024	Branstad, Jim	94.00	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116404	02/06/2024	Kratzke, Dawn	80.20	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116405	02/06/2024	Rohlfing, Steve J	68.14	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116406	02/06/2024	Glidden, Elroy	127.00	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116407	02/06/2024	Borchert, Dave	120.20	Per Diems & Mileage - 12/7 & 1/10
116408	02/06/2024	Cooling, Steven	76.18	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116409	02/06/2024	Loveall, Tom H	86.90	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116410	02/06/2024	Femrite, Lyle	56.08	Per Diem & Mileage - 1/10
116411	02/15/2024	US Bank	75.00	Greater Mankato Growth - 2/6 Economic Update - 1/4 - KyB
			3,959.87	Adobe - Acrobat (9) & Creative Cloud Licenses (1) - 1/9 - KyB
			500.00	Toyota of Mankato - Down Payment on RAV4 - 12/6 - KyB
			889.63	AirBNB - Energizing Rural Communities Training Stay for Paola & Sam 1/23 to 1/24 - 1/3 - PF
			87.96	Frontier - Round Trip Flight to Denver for Energizing Rural Communities Training - 1/4 - PF
			151.19	Delta Air - Flight to Denver for Energizing Rural Communities Training for Sam - 1/5
			19.15	Cub Foods - Beverages for Commission Meeting - 1/10 - SH
			39.11	Arroy Restaurant - Dinner for 11/29 Transp Planners Meeting - 11/29 - JH
			120.51	Best Western of St Cloud - Hotel Stay for Transp Planners Meeting - 11/30 - JH
			20.00	Greater Mankat Growth - Legislative Session Event - 1/3 - NG
			35.00	QR.IO Generator - QR Code for Faribault Strategic Planning - 1/6 - NG
			35.58	Walgreens - Chocolate for Commissioner Meeting - 1/10 - NG
			19.74	USPS - Annual Report Mailing Postage - 11/30 - NG
			3.90	USPS - Envelopes - 12/1 - NG
			35.00	QR.IO Generator - QR Code for Faribault County - 12/6 - NG
			21.56	Best Buy - Cable for Nicole's Docking Station - 12/8 - NG
			39.99	Amazon - Award Plaque - 12/10 - NG
			21.97	HyVee - Cookies for Board Meeting - 12/13 - NG
			20.00	Secretary of State - UCC Filing Renewal for RLF Client - 12/7 - CW
			20.00	Secretary of State - UCC Filing for RLF Client - 12/7 - CW
			20.00	Secretary of State - UCC Filing for RLF Client - 12/7 - CW
			20.00	Secretary of State - UCC Filing for RLF Client - 12/20 - CW
			0.99	Apple - iCloud Monthly Storage - 11/25 - Nicole
			30.15	Crave Food & Drink of Bloomington - Dinner for MADO Meetings - 11/29 - Nicole
			50.32	Fire Lake Restaurant - Dinner for MADO Meeting - 11/28 - Nicole
			38.50	Hazelwood Food & Drink - Lunch for MADO Meeting - 11/30 - Nicole
			2,000.00	Harvard Kennedy School - Leadership Course for Nicole out of McKnight - 12/11 - Nicole
			310.00	Marbleseed - Organic Farming Conference Registration - 1/10 - SF
			31.06	HyVee FF - Fuel for Traverse - 1/10 - SF
			370.80	Sustainable Farming - Conference Registrations (4) - 1/10 - SF
			257.50	Sustainable Farming - Conference Registrations (2) - 1/10 - SF
			239.92	Quality Inn La Crosse - USDA Conference Stay - 1/16 - SF
			63.91	UPS Store - Shipping for Laptop to Paola - 11/27 - HB
			383.74	Modern Garage - Repairs to the Traverse - 11/27 - HB
			3.99	HyVee - Cookies for Meeting - 11/27 - HB
			50.43	Amazon - Office Supplies - 12/5 - HB
			35.46	HyVee FF - Fuel for Traverse - 12/6 - HB
			58.62	Pita Pit - Lunch for Wellness Activity - 12/8 - HB
			334.13	Artifact - Wellness Activity - 12/8 - HB
			22.01	US Bank - Service Fee - 12/22
			341.96	Hilton Bloomington - Hotel Stay for MADO Meetings - 11/30 - Nicole
Check Total	29,417.51			
Report Total:	29,417.51			

Finance Director's Report

Submitted by Ky Battern

April 10, 2024 Commission Meeting

Finance

- January and February were mostly consumed by year end reporting and work related to the revised budget for FY24. The revised budget along with a preliminary budget for FY25 will be brought to the B&P committee at the end of April.
- Upon the completion of the revised budget, a Budget vs Actual will be added to the Treasurer's Report/Monthly Financials.
- Strategic Planning work has been on going amongst the director level staff at R9. The plan is to present a final version come our fiscal year end if things go smoothly with our timeline.
- All of our Revolving Loan Fund has been successfully transitioned to the MAGIC Fund and US Bank. Earnings within these funds have greatly out paced that of what we were realizing within Wells Fargo. Our banking fees are a small fraction of what we incurred prior to the switch.
- Certificate of Deposits will be explored in the upcoming months to lock in favorable rates for available cash on hand within our RLF program.
- New R9 Vehicle (Toyota RAV4) was purchased on March 15th. Quotes were solicited from six dealerships in Mankato for the sale of the 2014 Traverse. The Mankato Chevy dealership had the highest at \$6,000 and the vehicle was sold to their lot.

Revolving Loan Fund

- RLF
 - Current Principal Outstanding = \$2,007,640
 - Approximately \$2.0M Available to Lend
- R9 requested the legal firm Blethen Berens to create loan templates for the Revolving Loan Fund program. Starting in April, all closing documents will be done in house and then subsequently reviewed by Blethen Berens. This should result in a reduction of origination fees to our clients as well as providing a higher end service.
- See Courtney Wright's Staff Report for more information regarding the Revolving Loan Fund.

Region Nine Area, Inc.

- RNAI will be the fiscal host for the Reconciliation Learning Journey Project. They plan to create their own non-profit within this upcoming year. This organization's mission is to educate the public on historical events and the repercussions of such actions on the indigenous people of the local area.

Good Afternoon,

I will be unable to attend the April 10th Board Meeting. I will be attending a Welcoming Communities conference in Dallas. My attendance is being fully sponsored through a grant the City of New Ulm received as a result of a partnership with Region Nine, who assisted with the grant application. Yay!

Ahead of this meeting I wanted to share some updates and progress of the Legislative & Communications Committee.

The L&C committee met several times since the beginning of the year. Our intent was to revisit the Legislative Priorities list prepared by prior committee members that outlined regional priorities related to economic development, education, and overall quality of life.

In February, our committee met twice and were joined by guests Scott McMahon of the Greater Minnesota Partnership, and Senator Nick Frentz, who both provided informative updates about the prior and upcoming legislative session. Through some great discussion, it was identified that while our communities seem to have similar concerns regarding housing, economic development, education, and infrastructure, the specifics varied. It was decided that instead of attempting to outline regional priorities that may or may not be of priority to all of our region, we believe that supporting legislative priorities that support essential needs such as water, shelter, food, and safety should be the focus.

At our meeting on February 14th, we discussed water quality and infrastructure needs, rural EMS challenges, and childcare shortages as three of the top issues of our region with Senator Frentz. His explanation of the funding processes and programs available was helpful.

At this time, Governor Walz has allocated around \$10M in funding to support rural EMS and is open to conversation to add more funding. Both LMC and CGMC are advocating for additional funding and the talks will continue over the next several weeks.

DEED is allocating \$6.5M in grant funding in 2024 to support quality, affordable childcare and address the shortages. Information on available grants can be found on the DEED website. Water-related challenges continue to be a priority throughout Region Nine. While each community has its own challenges and path to progress, there are opportunities to collaborate on approaches for specific projects.

This is meant to be a general recap but will defer to Committee Vice Chair Norton to update the commissioners at the meeting.

Again, my apologies for not being able to attend the meeting, but I am happy to report it's because of a Region Nine grant!

Andrea Boettger

RNDC Vice Chair

RNDC Chair of Legislative & Communications Committee

City of New Ulm

North Star Promise Program

A new scholarship that makes college affordable for more Minnesotans

Beginning in fall 2024, the North Star Promise (NSP) Scholarship program will make college accessible and affordable for any eligible Minnesotan who has the desire to earn a credential. The program will cover the full cost of tuition and fees for eligible Minnesotans at public institutions and tribal colleges in the state.

NSP is intended to have a positive impact on multiple fronts:

- Help stabilize enrollment at Minnesota public institutions of higher education;
- Serve as an economic driver for Minnesota by educating qualified workers who are much needed to fill vacancies in the state's labor force;
- Create a viable higher education path for Minnesota residents who may have previously thought education was not a possibility for them.

Eligibility and Academic Requirements

- ✓ You must be a Minnesota resident
- ✓ Have a family Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) as reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Minnesota Dream Act Application below \$80,000.
- ✓ Attend a Minnesota public higher education institution or tribal college
- ✓ Not be in default on a state or federal student loan
- ✓ Be enrolled taking at least one credit
- ✓ Meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards
- ✓ Have not already earned a baccalaureate degree
- ✓ Be enrolled in a program or course of study that applies to a degree, diploma, or certificate

What's Covered?

NSP will cover the full remaining cost of college tuition and fees, after other scholarships, grants, and tuition waivers have been applied.

Eligible Institutions

- ✓ All Minnesota State colleges and universities
- ✓ All University of Minnesota system campuses
- ✓ All tribal colleges

North Star Impact

An estimated 15,000 students will benefit from NSP in the first academic year of implementation.



Scan the
QR code to
learn more



North Star Promise Program

APPLICATION STEPS & AWARD DETAILS

Eliminating financial barriers: Your path to college is clear with the North Star Promise ✓

Maximum Award Amounts

There is no maximum length of time that students can receive the NSP, but there are credit limits.

For students earning a:

2-year Associate Degree:

Receive NSP up to 60 credits

4-year Bachelor's Degree:

Receive NSP up to 120 credits

Last-Dollar Scholarship

NSP is a “last-dollar” program, which considers any other sources of gift aid funding that students receive, before the award is applied.

The goal of this strategy is to utilize all available federal, state, private and institutional gift aid to provide as many eligible students as possible with a tuition and fee-free pathway to a college education.

How do I apply?

Students apply by completing the:

- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at www.studentaid.gov or
- Minnesota Dream Act application at www.oh.state.mn.us/MNDreamAct

What happens next?

The college or university you are attending will assess your eligibility on a term-by-term basis and award North Star Promise Scholarships to all eligible students.

Your award amount will be calculated by your college or university. They will determine your tuition and required fee charges, subtract all other sources of gift aid (scholarships, grants, waivers and stipends) and award the remaining amount in a North Star Promise Scholarship. Students will be notified through the college or university’s standard awarding process.

How much money can I receive?

There is not a limit on the maximum term, yearly, or lifetime dollar amount of an award you can receive. The amount you receive is based on the “last-dollar” calculation of your eligibility on a term-by-term basis. You can receive up to 100% of the amount charged in tuition and required fees per term, minus all other sources of gift aid you receive. You must continue to meet the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards at your school.

If funds are available, the highest need students may also receive North Star Promise Plus funds. **Note: The details on the North Star Promise Plus provision of the program are still being determined.**

Questions about the program? Contact:
NorthStarPromise.OHE@state.mn.us

Nicole Griensewic

Kristian and I had a meeting with Julie Tesch and Marnie Werner of the Center for Rural Policy & Development. Julie recently joined the Commission and has helped connect staff to other stakeholders and resources in the state. Marnie and I both serve on the Board for the Center for Rural Behavioral Health w. MSUM.

I was asked to present online to the SE MN Together group on March 25th. The informal group continues to have conversations on how their 11-county region could access federal resources like the federal EDA if reforming as an Economic Development District, (EDD). The group wanted to hear from me on what other programs/ resources Region Nine has been able to leverage because of being designated as an EDD. I have been cautious to only speak to our work and our region, as ultimately it is up to the 11 counties of SE MN to decide what will be best for them. However, I have been happy to assist with their questions as they think through possible structures.

I have been extra busy with additional meetings since the BDO Zone press release went out. Because of my attendance at the Advanced Bioeconomy Leadership Conference (ABLC), I was able to meet numerous individuals who are interested in learning more about our region and its available feedstock. The BDO Zone report by Ecostrat designated our region as an 'A', meaning it is Investor Grade. This announcement has brought various new partners to Region Nine. Sam, Sabri and I have conducted numerous meetings w. interested parties. One example is the biofuels company, DG Fuels. We had a video meeting with their CEO who I met while in DC. DG Fuels is an emerging leader in renewable hydrogen & biogenic based, synthetic low emissions aviation & diesel fuel. Their technology does not require the development of new engines or an expanded hydrogen transportation & storage infrastructure. They have been strongly encouraged by the Department of Energy to apply for more funding to build more facilities. They are looking at Minnesota but need to have more sites identified soon. This has caused our team internally to try and do outreach to communities/counties who may be interested in attracting the company. The site would require at least 800 acres but would create at least 650 full-time jobs.

Another meeting was held w. Yilkins Drying Solutions who are looking to upgrade biomass & organized residues to produce biofuels & other high-value products.

I was also asked to join a State Clean Energy-Based Economic Development Working Group. The group meets monthly and is organized by NASEO-IEDC. (*National Association of State Energy Offices & International Economic Development Council*)

Another group that I was recruited to is the newly formed MnDOT Corridor Planning Advisory Committee. MnDOT wanted to ensure there was representation from the Development Commissions by having an Executive Director join the group.

Sam and I were interviewed by MPCA to be a potential host site for an AmeriCorps Green Corps member. We had applied to host a possible member to assist with community outreach and engagement. The interview seemed to go very well. We should be informed by the end of April if RNDC was selected as a host site. If granted a member, they would report directly to Sam.

The Aachen region of Germany reached out to us as a potential partner for a 'sister region'- type relationship. I will be working with county administrators over the next few months to identify any who are interested in learning more about potentially being paired with a region in Germany that has a lot in common with ours [region]. Aachen's community and economic development portfolio aligns similarly with the major economic drivers within Region Nine. Namely – academia, manufacturing, and agriculture. Collaboration amongst our respective organizations would serve to further extend the impact of our shared development strategies.

Budget and Personnel committee updates:

- The committee meeting on April 16th will review results of the Executive Director annual performance evaluation w. HR Advisor Courtney Cutler. Emergency Succession plans for the Executive Director and Finance Director will also be on the agenda for approval.
- Have had meeting with employment law attorney to review her recommended revisions to the policy manual. She will present her recommendations at the April 30th committee meeting. That meeting will also include a revised FY24 budget and initial draft of the FY25 budget.

Staffing Update:

- Conducted Exit Interview with Paola Ferrario on March 20th. The current plan is to post the open planner position in the next two weeks.
- Have been assisting the new Executive Assistant, Sarah Janovsky with on-boarding and orientation tasks.
- Applied for a Connection Corps member to work on broadband expansion throughout the region. If awarded, this AmeriCorps member would report directly to Alejandra.
 - o During the meeting at the Finnish Embassy in DC, the question came up right away regarding our broadband coverage and if it is competitive compared to other regions. Unfortunately, our region is not well covered with redundant broadband. This highlights our need to focus on pursuing grant funding for broadband for our local communities.
 - o Ensuring our region has competitive up and download speeds will help attract foreign direct investment.

Alejandra Bejarano

RNDC has been selected to participate in the Rural Local-to-Local (L2L) Community Partnership Program, connecting rural communities nationwide for peer learning opportunities and knowledge sharing. Alejandra has been actively participating in the program.

After reviewing RNDC's application, the American Connection Corps program has decided to move forward with RNDC as a host organization for an ACC member. This member would offer additional support for broadband initiatives in the region. Alejandra is leading this effort and collaborating closely with Scott McFarland, Director of National Service at Lead for America. The next steps involve recruitment and interviews.

Alejandra has also been collaborating with staff from the University of Minnesota Extension to explore potential partnerships as part of the workforce task force.

Moreover, Alejandra successfully completed the renewal application for the Partnership Planning grant through the Economic Development Administration earlier this month.

After receiving funding through the Drive for Five program from DEED, Greater Mankato Growth will contract with RNDC to develop curriculum and training sessions for regional employers interested in hiring international students.

Alejandra continues participating in the International Student Retention Peer Learning Cohort, facilitated by Global Detroit, as part of the ongoing efforts by the task force. Additionally, Mireille, Mercedes and Alejandra presented student survey results to the task force members, who encouraged the team to meet with MNSU's Global Education Dean and present the findings to the Council of Deans.

Alejandra has also been working on organizing CED committee meetings for the calendar year. She is also reaching out to external stakeholders to expand the committee's membership. Meetings will be scheduled and designed around the four cornerstones outlined in the CEDS, with plans for the committee to tour different regional facilities.

Kristian Braekkan

Kristian hosted Darrin Fleener, MN representative for the federal EDA on a site visit to Waseca on April 5th in partnership with the County of Waseca to visit the location for the Workforce Development Center under preparation in the former Mutual Building. Representatives from Senator Klobuchar's office and the City of Waseca were also present, along with Alejandra, Sam, and Saga from RNDC.

Kristian and Nicole also submitted a research proposal to the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (SMIF) on March 26th to assess economic readiness for change. The intended start date for phase 1 is April 1 going through September 30, with phase 2 going from October 1 through June 30, 2025.

Kristian has also been working with MNSU Mankato on an National Science Foundation (NSF) application to support vocational training, externships, and internships in the region with a proposed start date of July 1st. It would be a one-year commitment for Region Nine.

Finally, Kristian and Saga visited the Regional Treatment Center in St. Peter with Jason Bruns from MNSU-Mankato on March 28th to explore opportunities for partnerships as they pertain to workforce development, recruitment of professional staff, and implementation of LEAN Manufacturing trainings on site.

Sabri Fair

Sabri worked with Convivencia Hispana a community organization in St. James to apply for and successfully received \$100,000 in funding from the Department of Energy through their Community Energy Innovation Prize. The group will use the funding to hire and train Spanish-speaking community energy navigators, who have the goal of organizing 200 free energy audits for the community. With the data compiled from the energy audits, the community will be prepared to apply for and implement scalable projects that can meet the needs of multiple residences at once. One similar example is for the 7 energy audits we organized in Comfrey, only 1 household had attic insulation that was at or above the current recommended level. Therefore, the community can demonstrate that this is a widespread issue and can apply for funding to add insulation to homes, among many other possible projects.

Sabri was also successful in working with the St. Peter, Waseca, and Mankato Head Start locations to apply for and receive farm to school funding through the Minnesota Department of Ag. They will have \$10,000 to purchase locally grown foods through 2025.

Through Region Nine's Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant, Sabri conducted outreach to local farmers to coordinate the purchase of excess locally grown vegetables during the 2024 growing season. The vegetables will go to South Central Minnesota Food Recovery and Wooden Spoon and will then be distributed at no cost to communities in need. This summer, the partnership will purchase \$14,000 worth of fresh produce from local farmers. Next summer, the partnership will have \$16,000 remaining to disburse to local farmers.

As a result of the farmland access event that Sabri organized in Montgomery last fall, four Kenyan farmers are renting 4 acres and a high tunnel this growing season from a local farmer who is scaling back their farming business. The farmers who live in Mankato and St. Peter will be able to utilize the extra space to grow culturally relevant crops their community can't currently buy in local grocery stores.

Sabri has been supporting Montgomery Brewery in writing a grant application for the Resilient Food System Infrastructure grant through MDA. If awarded, Montgomery Brewery would use the funding to expand their storage capacity, which will in turn increase their production capacity, allowing them to add 100 more accounts across the state.

Sabri has finished identifying farmers for Local Foods Week and has 10 farmers from across the region that he will work to connect with local restaurants.

Sabri has also started work on the Regional Food Rescue Plan with the local SHIP coordinators. The goal of this plan is to assess the food rescue landscape and how our food access organizations can be better prepared to rescue food to feed people instead of it ending up in landfills.

Sarah Janovsky

Sarah has been getting up to speed on all things RNDC. She has been meeting one-on-one with other staff members to get to know them and their roles within RNDC, attending meetings to better understand the scope of RNDC projects, and scheduling and preparing for upcoming meetings.

Nathan George

Nathan wrote a proposal for a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Research Grant. The proposed project is a Needs Assessment for Arts and Culture programming in Region Nine. The grant was submitted March 25, and the status of the application will be known in November. A needs assessment to identify a gap in arts programming hasn't been done for the region and was a request from multiple art stakeholders.

Nathan has been working with Samuel to promote the BDO Zone 'A' Rating. He sent out a press release to all our media contacts in the region, including many in the metro area. The story was picked up by an international energy website, EnergyBusinessReview.com, and was front page content. The promotional campaign will include a banner on the rndc.org home page and an accompanying webpage. There will also be a webinar created in conjunction with Ecostrat that will be used to promote this 'A' rating.

Nathan and Samuel are also working together on the upcoming Grant Opportunity Forum on April 12. Nathan has been promoting the event and helping with logistics for the event. The forum will have speakers from a diverse range of organizations to discuss the funding available to the region.

Nathan and Courtney have been working on an outline for marketing the RLF program. The first piece will be a brochure aimed at lending institutions explaining what RNDC offers in gap financing and the terms. Future plans include video highlights of loan clients' success stories. The aim is to create video content for the RNDC website and YouTube channels and promote the business.

Mireille Ghassan

Mireille has been working alongside Saga and Mercedes, Kristian, and Maggie on the Faribault County survey. She completed the survey analysis portion of the project and helped the team write and complete the report. Mireille is currently working on selecting information and data to include in a PowerPoint which will be presented to the county commissioners once completed.

Mireille has also been working alongside Alejandra and Mercedes on the International Student survey and Employer survey for the Workforce Taskforce. Both surveys are closed now and received a good response rate. An analysis of the student survey has been completed and was presented to the workforce and received a lot of praise. Mireille is currently working on collecting and analyzing the responses from the employer survey.

Mireille is working with Saga, Mercedes, and Kristian on a survey for Sibley County. We met with County and City officials to get a better idea of the current state of their communities as well as wants and needs. The team is developing a strategic economic development plan aimed at providing a guide and resources for the community to tackle some of their challenges.

Mireille created a CEDS 101 brochure which gives an overview of the CEDS, how it benefits communities and an overview of our region. Mireille is also working with Alejandra to develop a survey template to use for the CEDS. Mireille has also been working on a plan to update the dashboard to focus more on the cornerstones.

Joel Hanif

Joel's work on the WEM Safe Routes to School plan continues. He conducted parent outreach during parent-teacher conferences at WEM Elementary School. Parents took the Parent SRTS survey and also participated in a 'dot' exercise where they placed dots on a map of Waterville at intersections they felt were dangerous for walkers and bikers. The same exercise will also be carried out again at the high school in Waterville and in Morristown at WEM Middle School. On April 9, Joel and other SRTS team members conducted school zone hazard observation assessments in Waterville where they observed behaviors of drivers, pedestrians, and bikers during arrival and dismissal time at WEM Elementary and WEM High School. This exercise will be repeated in Morristown on April 11.

Joel participated in St. Peter's Active Transportation Plan kickoff meeting on March 25. This meeting was introductory in nature and consisted mostly of visioning and strategizing the planning process. It included community members, local government officials, public health employees, and planners.

Joel is working on a USDOT Safe Streets and Roads For All (SS4A) planning grant application. If awarded, this grant would provide funding for RNDC to create a region-wide road safety action plan and would

unlock infrastructure implementation dollars. Also, having an action plan would make communities competitive for other opportunities beyond SS4A if action plan items fit well with another grant as the action plan will show documentation of the project proposal in an existing planning document.

Joel held a Region Nine TAC meeting on March 28. In this meeting, Tammy Meehan Russell of the PLUM Catalyst presented on the goMARTI autonomous transit pilot in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. The pilot program has a fleet of 5 vehicles that serve 70 pre-programmed stops in Grand Rapids. To increase accessibility, rides are free of cost and can be booked via app or call center. The pilot project will also be expanding to neighboring communities in the upcoming months. While fully autonomous transit (these vehicles still have operators that can intervene) is still a ways in the future, the technological advances in a rural community like Grand Rapids still show what kind of future transit solutions rural communities in Region Nine could implement.

Mercedes Sempe

Mercedes worked on the Taskforce project with Alejandra and Mireille. She analyzed part of the data from a survey – the international students survey. After the thematic analysis, Mercedes prepared part of a presentation and delivered it in front of the Taskforce group on March 20th. Mercedes, Alejandra, and Mireille started working on a second survey, the international students' employer's survey, for which they met, organized the data, and started analyzing it to deliver a second presentation.

Mercedes worked with Kristian, Saga and Mireille on finishing the Faribault County Economic Development Plan. She offered recommendations for the plan and helped edit it. They are currently working on a presentation to explain the plan to the County commissioners.

Mercedes and Alejandra met with Global Minnesota at the MNSU, Mankato campus to see avenues in which Region Nine Development Commission and Global MN can work together. The Taskforce project was discussed during this meeting.

Mercedes met with City Administrators of Sibley County to interview them on the current needs and strengths of their cities as part of the Sibley County Economic Development Plan.

Sam Sharp

Samuel has continued developing applications to the federal EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) opportunity. RNDC is involved in two separate applications focusing on equitable residential decarbonization and providing solar for public buildings. The former, led by the MPCA, is comprised of coalition members representing community leadership ranging across the state. RNDC was invited to be a coalition member for this application and has committed to supporting disadvantaged communities throughout the region. If awarded, RNDC will receive approximately \$6 million dollars to be spent on project activities described in the application. This project is designed to reduce energy costs for residents

by funding energy audits and upgrades for energy efficient appliances, as well as building out capacity for RNDC appointed staff members to oversee and manage this funding. Samuel has worked with Sabri to help the MPCA develop this application and met with the Minnesota Southwest Housing Partnership to act as a local partner to help carry out these efforts.

The second CPRG application, led by RNDC, features a coalition of RDO's across the state and is designed to fund the implementation of solar energy systems on public buildings. This grant will reduce utility costs for building operations and allow more flexibility for community budgets to be reinvested back into the local economy. The scope of work will set aside ~\$2.5 million per RDO, allowing 9-12 solar projects to be fully funded and tailored for community need. Each of these CPRG grants have a 5-year window to spend the funds accordingly and applications will be submitted to the EPA on April 1st.

Samuel has continued his work with the BDO Zone project. Coordinating the press release with Nate and Ecostrat, meeting with regional stakeholders, and having conversations with companies interested in investing in the region. Marketing efforts will continue over the next few months, including a webinar in which Samuel and RNDC will promote the region and the results of the BDO Zone Investor Grade rating to a global bioeconomy network. Samuel will continue his outreach and engagement efforts to determine suitable site locations, understand community impacts, and build out his network of stakeholders and subject matter experts.

Samuel and Sabri will host their final Comfrey Climate Resilience Plan meeting in May, wrapping up the planning process, putting on a grants workshop for community members, and presenting the final plan to the Comfrey City Council. The grants workshop will be designed to educate community members about applying to funding opportunities and using the resilience plan as a resource to form these applications most effectively.

Lastly, Samuel interviewed with the MPCA's MN GreenCorps Program following a successful application approved at the most recent Board meeting. This application requested the support of a MN GreenCorps member to extend RNDC capacity on community outreach, supporting project ideation, and navigating the vast abundance of resources and material related to climate and energy resilience. A follow-up for this opportunity is anticipated to occur in late April when further information will be provided on the application's status.

Courtney Wright

On March 14th, Courtney met with the Loan Committee to present Lykke Books LLC. Lykke Books is a bookstore that will be operating in the booming downtown city of New Ulm. Lykke Books LLC's owner, Brianne Taralson, requested \$74,398 to help with the start-up costs associated with their new storefront. The storefront will operate with a couple different streams of revenue. Those streams of revenue are retail sales of merchandise and rental income from a grab-and-go café (Gutes Essen), local artisans,

multi-purpose gym, and office space for Lykke Communities Inc (a sister non-profit 501(c) (3) organization). We are thrilled to announce the Loan Committee approved this loan request for Lykke Books LLC!

Courtney was asked to join 1 Million Cups as an organizer. She has been attending the monthly 1 Million Cups events and was pleased to accept the role of an organizer. She will meet with the other organizers on a monthly basis to plan the upcoming events that are hosted the first Wednesday of the month. 1 Million Cups provides a supportive, inclusive space for entrepreneurs and their communities to gather and connect, where they can work through business challenges and identify opportunities.

On Friday, March 29th, Courtney plans to present Korte's Welding & Repair LLC's loan presentation to the Loan Committee. Korte's Welding & Repair is a welding shop located in Fairmont. More to come on the approval of this loan request.

Courtney is planning on presenting 2 more loan applications by the end of April. She is working with a couple of other business clients to gather information for their loan applications.

Saga Rydaaker

Saga has been working with Kristian, Mercedes and Mireille on completing the Strategic economic development plan for Faribault County, which included compiling the survey answers and analyzing each age group. We concluded the first draft of the report and are now focusing on creating a presentation for the City Administration and the commissioners, which will include how the county can adopt the information and statistics found in the report.

Saga has been working on the Strategic economic development plan for Sibley County with Kristian, Mercedes and Mireille, which has involved meetings with the city Administration and County commissioners. Saga sent out the first draft of the survey to the City Administration for them to review and leave feedback. Hopefully we will be able to print the finalized version of the survey by the beginning of April and send them out to the general population of Sibley County. Saga has also gathered data on the area to combine with the answers we'll receive from the survey to later conduct a more in-depth analysis of the challenges facing the County.

Saga has also been working on the North Star Promise project along with Kristian and Jason Bruns. She has been collecting data regarding every public college in MN. She also collected data on several industries in each county and compiled the starting salary, the gender pay gap, and the percentage of the county's population working in specific industries. Furthermore, she has also compiled all the collected data to study which areas in Minnesota will potentially benefit best/worst from the North Star Promise. She will be presenting the analysis at the commissioners meeting on April 10th.

NADO Annual Policy Conference Recap

I arrived in D.C. early to have scheduled meetings with NADO President Chris Brown and Executive Director Joe McKinney. Chris Brown works in Sulfur Springs, TX on economic development issues like our region's. His city manager Marc Maxwell was a fellow participant in November in Denmark. They are working at creating a bioenergy park for energy independence, job creation and overall economic development.

I attended my first NADO Executive Committee meeting, serving as Secretary of the Board and representing the Midwest. There was a long discussion on the status of the federal EDA being up for reauthorization in the Senate's Environment & Public Works (EPW) committee.

Participated in the board of directors meeting. Discussion topics included the status of the strategic plan, the next board meeting in June, and planning for the Annual Training Conference in October. Updates were shared regarding how all board members are up for reelection and the process for seeking nominations. Per the bylaws, some current members are not eligible to run as their attendance has not met the requirement.

NADO held an opening reception followed by group dinner in old town Alexandria that I organized since other Region Nine folks were also in the D.C. area for National League of Cities, (NLC). The Region Nine dinner included Mankato Council President and RNDC Chair Mike Laven, Mayor of Eagle Lake and RNDC Commissioner, Lisa Norton, City Admin., Eagle Lake, Jennifer Bromelad and New Ulm City Council President and RNDC Vice Chair Andrea Boettger and me. I invited Norton and Bromelad to meet fellow NADO attendees and introduced NADO Executive Director McKinney to them at a private reception.

Breakout sessions in the conference included topics on the use of Artificial Intelligence, Placemaking, Housing, and others. The Department of Energy were new to speaking at NADO, however I had requested they be on the agenda, as they have funding for new projects. I had also pushed for sessions on A.I., as I can see opportunities for it's use in our work, while also seeing major concerns if the technology is not used appropriately. The White House's National Economic Council was also present with two speakers.



The NADO Executive Committee was asked to all attend the Senate's EPW Committee. The committee was scheduled to hear the federal EDA's reauthorization bill (SF 3891), which was the first in 20 years. The bipartisan bill passed the Senate committee. NADO is working to find leads to carry a companion bill in the House. No member from MN serves on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, who would draft the bill. However, Congressman Finstad and his staff referenced a colleague who is in the committee who may be supportive if they ask. Andrea and I will follow up accordingly and bring in NADO, as appropriate.



Reauthorizing EDA has been the number one priority for NADO, as the agency serves as the main federal partner to local development districts like Region Nine. The updated language would modernize the planning grants by raising the current amount per EDD and would fund at 100% vs. needing a local match from the EDD for the planning grants.

Worth noting, the group photo of the Executive Committee and NADO staff was edited to add me. 😊 The group photo was taken after I left to race over to the House side for our scheduled meeting w. Congressman Finstad.

Fellow MADO colleague Jay Trusty, Executive Director of the SW Regional Development Commission and his Board Chair, Township Rep. Paul and Jay's youngest son Eli joined me and Andrea for Capitol Hill Visits with Congressman Finstad, staff of Senator Smith and Senator Klobuchar. In total, the group did three visits together to discuss common issues in our regions, including water infrastructure projects, support for the EDA, and pursuing BIL/IIJA funding for our local communities as they work on energy efficiency and reducing energy costs and other topics. All offices were invited to join our June 12th regional annual bus tour.



NADO held an evening reception at the Botanic Gardens. I invited Mayor Norton and City Administrator Bromelad to join Andrea and I, since they also represent Region Nine.

Andrea and I met for lunch with a colleague of mine from the ACE network who works at the State Department. They proposed having me ask NADO to be a partner in a new pilot program to allow foreign nationalists work in the US for a few months. My colleague oversees the J visa program and through their support may be able to assist units of governments like ours and other partners in retaining specialized talent for specific initiatives. In return, the individuals would get experience living and working in the U.S.

I attended a morning coffee meeting with Senator Klobuchar. Commissioner Boettger attended coffee meeting with Senator Smith while I raced over the ABLC conference.



The Danish Embassy invited me and Commissioner Boettger to meet with them to discuss the BDO Zone and progress since the delegation to Denmark. Benedikte was the organizer for the Danish Delegation in November. She works for the Trade Council and specializes in biogas. She has been a fabulous contact and works closely with Chris Cassidy of USDA.

We had a very productive meeting at Finnish Embassy with Saamuli Kaijomaa, Counselor, Trade & Investment and Tuomas discussed potential clean energy projects, as they have industries looking for partners. The biggest concern that came out of that meeting was our need to improve our broadband coverage and overall speeds. The Embassy staff emphasized how they had numerous companies who would be eager to learn more about our region's potential, however broadband coverage would be their first question.

Elaine Kumpula is a Minnesotan who serves as the Honorary Council of Finland- Minnesota & South Dakota. She assisted with connecting us to the right folks who work on FDI and economic development.



I attended one day of the Advanced Bioeconomy Leadership Conference per our contact at USDA's recommendation. I was able to have meeting with USDA Renewable Energy Specialist Chris Cassidy and discuss updates in our region and potential projects. I discussed potential USDA funding to support feasibility studies for large infrastructure projects. One project discussed was the expansion and conversion of New Ulm's district heating system from steam to hot water. Another project discussed was for the planning and development of a bio energy park in the region.

The Toronto-based company, the RNDP team, and Internal Review Committee (IRC) has been actively working with this past year, Ecostrat pushed out the press release for the BDO Zone rating of an 'A' Investor grade while the ABLC conference was still in session. This was strategically done, so funders and potential partners were a captive audience while in D.C. Boettger and I were able to discuss this project with attendees. Follow up meetings are scheduled for this coming week.



And finally, a complete but welcomed surprise, I ran into a friend and former classmate from kindergarten to graduating with at Mankato West at the ABLC. He is now a chemical engineer specializing in digesters! A very small world! Mohamad Ali will be another great connection for Region Nine as we work on ensuring our region is 'on the map' for investment.



Terms & Abbreviations

ACC – American Connection Corp	MAPO – Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization
APR – Annual Performance Reports (CEDS)	MCLA – Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
ATP – Area Transportation Partnership	MDH – Minnesota Department of Health
AURI – Agricultural Utilization Research Institute	MnDOT – Minnesota Department of Transportation
BDO – Bioeconomy Development Opportunity	MnSCU – Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System
CRP – Carbon Reduction Program	MPCA – Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
CEDS – Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	MSA – Metropolitan Statistical Area
COPAL – Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Acción Latina (Communities Organizing Latino Power and Action)	MSU-M – Minnesota State University, Mankato
CGMC – Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities	MYLAP – MN Young America Leaders Program
CPRG – Climate Pollution Reduction Grant	NEA – National Endowment for the Arts
CSET – College of Science, Engineering & Technology	NEH – National Endowment for the Humanities
CSM – Climate Smart Municipalities	NUBRIC – New Ulm Business Resource Innovation Center
CSSJ – Climate Smart St. James	NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Services
CTS – Center for Transportation Studies	PI – Prosperity Initiative
DEED – Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development	PROTECT – Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-saving Transportation
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	SAF – Sustainable Aviation Fuel
GMDC – Greater Mankato Diversity Council	SBDC – Small Business Development Center
GMNP – Greater Minnesota Partnership	SCC – South Central College
HACER – Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research	SHIP – Statewide Health Improvement Partnership
IRC – Independent Review Committee	SMIF – Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
LGU – Local Government Unit	SRTS – Safe Routes to Schools
LMI – Labor Market Information	SS4A – Safe Streets for All
LMI – Low-to-Moderate Income	STIP – State Transportation Improvement Program
MADO – Minnesota Association of Development Organizations	TAC – Transportation Advisory Committee